Rigaud pinx

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THE REV^D DAVID WILLIAMS

1822

LECTURES

ON THE

UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES AND DUTIES

OF

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

AS THEY HAVE BEEN READ IN

MARGARET-STREET, CAVENDISH-SQUARE,

IN THE YEARS 1776, AND 1777.

BY THE

REV. DAVID WILLIAMS.

K.

Αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν. PLATO.

VOL. I.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;

AND SOLD BY THE FOLLOWING BOOKSELLERS IN LONDON:

J. DODSLEY, PALL-MALL; J. ALMON, AND W. DAVIS, PICCADILLY;
P. ELMSLEY, STRAND; G. KEARSLEY, FLEET-STREET;
AND E. AND C. DILLY, POULTRY.

BY MR. PISSOT, AT PARIS; MR. SPENCER, JUN. AT BERLIN;
AND MR. BOHN, AT HAMBURGH.

MDCCLXXIX.

1

INTRODUCTION.

THE common definition of infanity is—too great attention to one object; which draws, as to an intenſe focus, all the powers of the mind; and makes the unhappy perſon riſe, occaſionally, above the general level of humanity, in the flights of a diſordered imagination, and in plans of viſionary inſtitutions, as much as he ſinks beneath it, in the regularity and prudence of his general conduct.

The inſtitution of a form of public worſhip, on thoſe principles which ariſe immediately from nature, in a community, where almoſt every thing in morals, religion, and policy, are decided upon by authority; the reſolution of a man, to be the author of it, who does not covet ſufferings, and has not the diſpoſitions of a martyr; the idea of leaving the plan to ſucceed by its merits, in a country where every thing is rendered ſucceſsful by money or protection:—theſe have been urged as proofs of inſanity; and perhaps they may be.—But the application of them to me, has been owing to an unacquaintance with the following facts, which imply the hiſtory of an inſtitution of public worſhip, on the univerſal principles of morals.

I quitted the cuſtomary offices of the profeſſion to which I was educated, for reaſons which have been already aſſigned.* But,

* *Vide* Appendix to the ſecond Edition of Eſſays on Public Worſhip.

either becauſe religion is eſſential to the human mind; or becauſe the habits of a profeſſion are, like all others, very difficult to be ſuſpended—I could not reſt ſatisfied out of my employment. On intimating my ſituation, I had hopes given me of the moſt flattering encouragement. But, on ſeeing my plan extended beyond the limits of the Chriſtian Church, they were withdrawn, and my papers were put up; for I had none of the views of reformers and apoſtles: and it was my intention not to engage, until it appeared to be for the ſervice and pleaſure of others, as well as my own.

In converſation with a man of the firſt rank in the preſent age, as a philoſopher and politician, this ſubject was introduced; and his ſentiments and wiſhes agreeing with mine, ſome perſons of our acquaintance were applied to, who were found ſo well-diſpoſed, that ſeveral meetings were appointed; and the Liturgy, which I had drawn up, underwent four or five impreſſions, for the purpoſes of being corrected and accommodated to their judgment and taſte.

Theſe circumſtances are mentioned, to obviate the charge of preſumption; and to teſtify, that, in a great and important undertaking, every ſtep in my power was taken, to ſhew, I reſpected that public, whoſe prepoſſeſſions I might affect; and did not ruſh before it, with the haſty and inſolent impetuoſity of an infatuated enthuſiaſt.

I am ſenſible that the plan may be injuriouſly degraded, by appearing to be the unadviſed project of any individual, for his own emolument

emolument and advantage; a circumſtance, which could not fail of claſſing it with the deſigns of fanatics to reform churches, or of miſſionaries to gain dominion by new opinions.

This buſineſs has not any thing in common with ſuch deſigns. The Liturgy, on the univerſal principles of religion and morality, was firſt intended as a gratification and pleaſure, to a ſmall number of perſons, who could worſhip on no other; to be publicly uſed, on the ſuppoſition, that it would afford the ſame gratification and pleaſure, to great numbers in the ſame circumſtances, and bring me ſome recompence for my trouble in uſing it.

When the deſign was made public, the expectations entertained by ſome, and the apprehenſions of others, were equally ill-founded and extravagant. Nay, the opinions formed on the ſteps which have been hitherto taken, are not the moſt judicious. Experiments may be to the public as fallacious as fables; they often occaſion as many errors, and are always expected to prove too much. If the inſtitution in Margaret-ſtreet were only to prove, that a liturgy may be drawn up, on principles which all mankind acknowledge, and may be uſed without offence even to ſectaries and bigots, it would deſerve conſideration and reſpect. A biſhop, quitting his dioceſe, and attended by both houſes of parliament, in the ſame experiment, might have given it more eclat, but not more certainty. In the preſent caſe, it is a diſcovery made by a private man, at ſome riſque, and at ſome expence. It holds up to the world a fact, which has at all times been deemed incredible; the importance of which to morals,

and policy, may be underſtood, when men raiſe their thoughts from the elementary to the intellectual world; and the benefits of which may be enjoyed in future, by perſons, who might not have undergone the apprehenſions, anxieties, and inconveniencies, by which it has been aſcertained.

That good men of all nations and all religions; that believers in Moſes, Chriſt, and Mahomet, Free-thinkers, Deiſts, and even Atheiſts who acknowledge beneficent principles in nature, may unite in a form of public worſhip, on all the great and moſt important truths of piety and morality—can no more be a queſtion;——for it is demonſtrated; not by the arts of logic, or the declamations of oratory in books; but by a ſtated public ſervice, to which any man may have recourſe for ſatisfaction.

The uſe which may be made of this diſcovery, by preachers and politicians, are too obvious to remain long unobſerved.—Thoughts and opinions are joyleſs things, unleſs they can be communicated and avowed. This method of communication conſtitutes the bond by which all aſſociations, all clubs, and all parties, are held together. Deſtroy this method of communication, and all thoughts and opinions are diſſipated and ineffectual, as if not in being. There is no claſs of men, which contains, individually, ſo much influence, as that which holds thoſe perſons, who, under pretence of ſuperior information, neglect the eccleſiaſtic uſages which engage the people; and there is no claſs of men, in a collective idea of them, ſo totally inſig-

nificant and uſeleſs. They could not, as ſuch, carry a ſingle point againſt a Corniſh borough, conſiſting of twelve burgeſſes, who occaſionally aſſemble on the conditions of their annuities from ſome neighbouring lord. Let them be formed into congregations and aſſemblies; and let their treaſurers or managers have a communication with each other; and then eſtimate of what conſequence they may be!

I have thrown out theſe hints to ſeveral perſons, who are eminent for their knowledge in the preſent ſcience of politics; but I have not been underſtood.

The firſt real politician, who takes up this thought, and improves it to the utmoſt, will obtain an influence, which no money, nay, which no other means can procure.

It may be ſaid, theſe hints lead to ſedition.——"To have "right thoughts of things, and to communicate thoſe thoughts "to others, is the whole part we have to act on this ſtage "of the world." *—Thoſe who are denied this right, are to be pitied as unfortunate ſlaves; thoſe who give it up, and thoſe who do not claim and aſſert it, when proper occaſions offer, deſerve to have the chains of power rivetted on their necks. This, however, is alledged with all due reſpect to the conſtitution and laws of this country; neither of which need be violated, or treated with contempt, in the exerciſe of that liberty we have now under conſideration.

* Petvin's Letters on Mind, Page 1.

But

But all thoughts, wrong as well as right, ſhould be freely communicated; for truth cannot be diſtinguiſhed from falſehood, if either be reſtrained. The civil magiſtrate, therefore, has always miſtaken his duty and his intereſt, in reſtraining the avowal of principles and opinions. As it has been deemed good policy, to oblige every man to diſcover the means by which he ſupplies his expences;—it ſhould be a fundamental principle of government, that every man be not only allowed, but required, to avow the ſentiments and opinions which produce and influence his actions. A law to this effect might occaſion confuſion and diſtreſs in the retreats of affected prudence; while it produced more real advantage to knowledge, truth and virtue, than any improvement which has been made in the principles of the feudal governments. The public injury and loſs, do not ariſe from thoſe who aſſemble, and avow falſe opinions; but from thoſe who never aſſemble, and never publicly avow any opinions. The ſtate can have no dependance on ſuch men; for they fly to principles, claſſes, and ſituations, like Proteus to forms and ſhapes, as may ſuit their occaſional views. Whereas, if all men were required, not to be of a particular opinion, but to avow their opinions; they would be generally claſſed according to their abilities and merit; the ſupreme power would ſee what uſe to make of them; and innumerable benefits would reſult to ſociety, which have been either with-held, or very imprudently attempted to be procured by intolerance and perſecution.*

* There is a clauſe in an act of parliament, obliging every man to go to church. Would not this be advantageouſly exchanged for a requiſition, that every man ſhould avow his principles, by aſſociating with ſome claſs, or aſſembly, profeſſedly on the principles and motives of his actions?

It

It may be ſaid, that any other method of uniting, and improving the uſefulneſs, of free-thinkers, would be preferable to public-worſhip, and particularly to preaching, which is ineffectual, except on the weakeſt minds, who are generally influenced by it to their diſadvantage.

If thoſe who are friends to unbounded liberty of thinking, and univerſal toleration of opinion, could have proper links of union, in order to act together when occaſions require, I ſhould be indifferent in regard to the materials which formed them. Nay, I might prefer any other means to preaching, if any were ſo practicable and effectual; for the following important reaſon: that an order of men muſt be kept up, who are under a neceſſity of diſſembling their failings and faults, and conſequently of tainting their own minds, and thoſe of their hearers, with hypocriſy; a vice almoſt inſeparable from an aſſembly under the direction of a prieſt, whether called religious, moral, or ſentimental. This evil might in ſome meaſure be prevented, by diſcrediting affectations of purity, which are the decoys of ſectaries, for intereſted purpoſes.

Licentiouſneſs, in this caſe, can never have ſufficient influence to excite apprehenſions.

But there is no method, beſides preaching, by which men can be eaſily induced to aſſemble on opinions. Hence the efficacy of preaching, by which important revolutions have been occaſioned. A government judiciouſly conſtituted might render it ineffectu-

al;

al; and politicians ſay, that cuſtoms, manners and laws, wholly form the diſpoſitions and characters of mankind. Preaching and aſſembling are cuſtoms; they form habits, and affect manners:—but it muſt be owned, that theſe effects are in imperfect communities, ſuch as thoſe which now exiſt; and which are, like Gothic cathedrals, large and enormous in their ſtructures, ſupported by numerous buttreſſes, and deformed with fantaſtical ornaments.

The following Lectures were read at the Chapel in Margaret-ſtreet; where the Liturgy, on the univerſal principles of religion and morality, is uſed on Sunday mornings.

They were drawn up with all the ability and care I could beſtow on them. They are arranged as they were delivered; and may be obſerved to be a part of a methodical ſeries of lectures, on thoſe principles and duties which are acknowledged by all mankind.

Whether they contain any information on the ſubjects they treat of, is not very material, if they prove, as far as they go, that the great duties of life are derived from nature; that they are acknowledged by all men; and do not generate diſputes: and if they help to give importance and effect to an epoch in the hiſtory of eccleſiaſtical events, when the utmoſt liberty of the human mind is publicly aſſerted, and a form of worſhip uſed, by a regular and reſpectable congregation; in which every man, of every nation and religion in the world, may join with benefit and pleaſure.

MORAL

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INTRO-

MORAL LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Not forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together, as the manner of ſome is.

THE entire profligacy and deſtruction of a people are often occaſioned by a neglect of the means by which they were originally led to virtue and glory. Some of thoſe means, like many of the inſtruments of human wiſdom, will not bear the examination of reaſon: and though they may have effected wonders, when co-operating with the miſapprehenſion or ſuperſtition of the people, they may alſo have had ſome circumſtances in them extremely ridiculous and abſurd. Theſe circumſtances were not diſcerned in the early ſtate of ſocieties, when the principles that animated them were warm and impetuous. The end in view was generous and noble; and the heads of men had not learnt

to chuſe the means, by which their hearts were to be gratified. The early periods of ſociety, like thoſe of human life, are times of action, not of diſquiſition: and as the heart has ſometimes proved a better guide than the head, and rendered the youth of a man more virtuous than his more mature age; ſo in communities, the firſt periods have been virtuous, under the direction of the public paſſions; and the laſt have been profligate and vicious while abounding in what has been called knowledge and philoſophy.

I do not propoſe to explain this matter——No man of real judgment, who has heard and read of former times; or who will attentively look around him, and conſider the preſent, will, I think, diſpute this truth. In ſo limited a diſquiſition as a public diſcourſe, it is ſufficient to aſcertain the fact; and to make ſuch uſes of it as may ſerve the views of our aſſembling at this time.

The great principle which animated our brave and virtuous anceſtors; which tinctured with ſublimity the ſavageneſs of their virtues; impelled them to actions of diſintereſted patriotiſm; and gave wiſdom to their legiſlation and policy, at which we are aſtoniſhed——was religion. Their deſcendants, improved in all the arts of life; intelligent in the principles and intereſts of ſociety; with characters and names which ſcience and philoſophy will hand down to eternity—are advancing to a political decrepitude and deſtruction—from a puerile and wretched irreligion.

This

This may appear a paradox to thoſe perſons who have been accuſtomed to annex ideas to religion, which belong only to fanaticiſm and ſuperſtition. "What!" it may be ſaid, "are "the emancipated minds of philoſophers to be brought again "into the bondage of prieſtcraft? Are the firſt ſpirits and ge- "niuſes of human nature to ſuſpend that induſtry which ad- "vances knowledge by facts and experiments, to crouch at chi- "mæras, to define theological ſhadows, and to eſtimate minute "and immaterial diſtinctions, in the refined jargon of metaphy- "ſicks?"———

I will not make invidious compariſons between the preſent taſte for facts, which often float like unconnected atoms in the brain; which have no reference to principles; which may in time render our philoſophers incapable of forming a propoſition ——and the character of thoſe ages in which men dealt only in propoſitions, deductions, ſimiles and metaphors, without knowing many of the facts on which they were grounded. The labours of ingenious and great men ſhould ever be treated with reſpect; and even their extravagancies and follies with candour and indulgence. The abſurdities of theology and metaphyſicks were blended with principles which ſhould ſecure our predeceſſors from contempt; as our preſent purſuits may be guarded from the ridicule of poſterity by ſome facts or experiments which may lead to uſeful truths, or be of benefit to the world.

When we plead the cauſe of religion, we do not mean any particular mode of it. We muſt regard the modern Atheiſt, who

ſees nothing in nature but the operations of neceſſity and chance, and who believes there is no God, to be as inexcuſable for his irreligion—as thoſe who believe "there are Gods many;" and who think they ſee their operations in all the concerns and buſineſs of life. If I believe there were no Supreme Being diſtinct from Nature, I ſhould adore Nature as I now do God——and if I proceed farther, and could have the aſſurance to imagine that things are not always as they might be; are not ordered according to my ideas of perfect wiſdom and goodneſs; yet, as it is wonderful that things ſhould be ſo well as they are; and that in the ſum of exiſtence there ſhould be ſo much happineſs as to make it deſirable——this would claim my reſpectful attention——and this attention would be all the religion of which I ſhould be capable.

On the preſent ſubject we have nothing to do with the various doctrines, fables and opinions which have been generated by poetry, ſuperſtition and idolatry. It is not material to our purpoſe, whether the Atheiſt exclude the word God from his religious dialect; and aſcribe all we ſee to Nature, Neceſſity, or Chance: or whether the Deiſt ſucceed in eſtabliſhing his opinion, that God is a ſpirit diſtinct from Nature, and producing theſe effects by the operations of his will: or whether common pietiſts go farther, and with the ſeveral prophets and founders of religions, form images of him on the beſt ideas of human nature; give him perſon, affections, and paſſions—It is the moral character only, of Neceſſity, of Chance, of God, or of the deified forms of human imagination, which can affect us; for

we

we are wholly determined in the regulation of our religious and moral diſpoſitions by the quantity of good or benefit which, in our opinion, is produced by that principle, that being, or thoſe beings, which actuate and govern the univerſe. If we obſerve that the world and all the beings in it are formed with wiſdom, that every want may be ſupplied and every deſire gratified, by an infinity of proviſions, which ſeem to imply the greateſt goodneſs in the Being or the Principle who made them: this will be ſufficient to all the purpoſes of religion. All enquiries into the nature of that Being or Principle whoſe works or effects only we can ſee, are fruitleſs; for "none by ſearching can find him out." Piety therefore conſiſts in attention to the works of God; and to the power, wiſdom, and goodneſs which they exhibit. This cannot be done without delight, gratitude, and virtuous reſolutions—without an intention to act in our little ſpheres, in ſome degree according to thoſe great principles we have been contemplating.

In public worſhip, theſe pleaſures and reſolutions receive an increaſed ſtrength, from thoſe ſocial affections which are the moſt powerful principles of our nature.

Here philoſophy and philoſophers come under the reproach, and even the execration of the people. They are obſerved to ſearch with unremitting diligence into the works of God. Not a weed can grow; not a pebble can be picked up; but they examine its formation and uſes. Many of them, however, examine only with a view to private gratification, or private fame. A ſecluded and inquiſitive life has deſtroyed, in ſome

men,

men, that natural and ſocial principle which we always obſerve in an intelligent child; who communicates with alacrity all his little diſcoveries; and with the amiable view of diffuſing his wonder, and multiplying his delight. In the firſt ſimple and pure ages, we may imagine that the leſſons of philoſophy were ſo many acts of public worſhip. The wiſe man laid his diſcoveries before his neighbours; called on them to ſhare in his delight; and bid them copy, in their actions, ſome of the wiſdom and goodneſs which they obſerved. Philoſophy is now too diſtinct and ſelfiſh a profeſſion; and its purſuits and diſcoveries are not conſidered by the people as having any influence on the virtue or happineſs of the world.

A much inferior claſs of perſons to thoſe now mentioned come likewiſe under the reproach in my text. They ſometimes aſſume the denomination of Free-thinkers; but they deſerve not the appellation. They are diſtinguiſhed by a certain frivolous libertiniſm, both in principle and practice, which need not be deſcribed: they have thrown off the doctrines of religion, not becauſe they were properly convinced of their falſhood, but becauſe thoſe doctrines were reſtraints on their vices. They firſt became profligate, and then infidels. We mean to take no notice of ſuch men.

There are others, who ſuppoſe that by fair and candid enquiry they have diſcovered all the popular modes of faith to be equally the inventions of men; and that true religion conſiſts only in piety, juſtice, and temperance. The fury and barbarity of ſuperſtitious zeal have rendered them very cautious in the ſteps

they have taken to claim their undoubted right of worſhiping God according to their conſciences. They have complained that public worſhip has not been left, as the ſciences have been, to be altered and improved as men advanced in knowledge. Indeed, there have not been many fair experiments made to prove this. Religion has been laid hold of by the ſtate, as an expedient to ſerve its purpoſes; not generally and nobly countenanced, as the means of making men happy, by making them virtuous. A variety of ſects have ſprung up, who have not only relinquiſhed the advantages held out by the ſtate, but have withſtood its power. Here genuine and virtuous Free-thinkers might have hoped for ſhelter; if they had not ſpirit enough to aſſert their own rights. No. All denominations of diſſenters have founded their claims on the nature of their faith; and no ſect has aſſerted the indiſputable right of man, not only to think for himſelf, but even to diſturb the ſacred repoſe of the public, ſo far as to attempt its improvement and advantage. All religious contentions have been on the comparative excellence of theological tenets. An Arian or a Socinian might venture ſome inconvenience from a Calviniſt or Arminian—Why?—Not merely becauſe he felt himſelf entitled to a common right of human nature; but becauſe his faith was more rational or more ſcriptural; more worthy to be the eſtabliſhed belief; and to receive the dignities and emoluments of the church. Let any of theſe denominations be put into power; and we only exchange tyrants; and have new names and tenets, to which we muſt ſacrifice our integrity and liberty. The warfare of religious ſects has had ſome effect, however, in producing what they never intended, a ſpirit of univerſal toleration.—To avail ourſelves of this ſpirit, we call on thoſe who have deſerted our public aſſemblies, and by their

example

example injured the morals of the people, to diſcharge thoſe duties which they are at liberty to diſcharge; and the omiſſion of which is their reproach. Would the name of Free-thinker be ſcandalous, if Free-thinkers were to act on their principles? Is any honeſt man of any opinion deſpiſed, who acts from his real principles? And will any degree of wiſdom ſcreen us from juſt contempt, while we ſkulk under pretences leſt any miſerable and ignorant wretch ſhould call us by names which are rendered opprobrious only by our cowardice.

Every man who is at all diſtinguiſhed by his underſtanding or knowledge, has a number of people who look up to him, and are affected by his example. If they ſee him neglect the duties of public worſhip; their concluſion is, that they may do ſo likewiſe; for a perſon of his underſtanding muſt have good reaſons for his conduct. This truth may be illuſtrated in England; not by private inſtances only; but by means of pariſhes and provinces. When the country gentleman reſided on his eſtate; and had ſo much religion as to attend his church; all the pariſh followed his example; the people were often put in mind of their duties; and their morals were on the whole regular and good. At preſent, if a gentleman occaſionally viſits his eſtate, he never attends any kind of public worſhip. The conſequences almoſt univerſally over England are, that the churches are deſerted, and the people profligate and abandoned. They have no method of frequently recollecting their religious and moral obligations; and the motives and reaſons of a virtuous conduct are never laid before them. The general diſſoluteneſs and wretchedneſs of the people are to be attributed principally to theſe cauſes.

It

It ſeems to be our duty therefore to attend ſuch offices of public worſhip as are conſiſtent with our principles, becauſe we may thereby make the beſt uſe of our knowledge in the works of God, by rendering the wiſdom and goodneſs they diſcover, the reaſons of a moral conduct: we may keep up the moſt pleaſing kind of ſociety with our fellow-creatures; do them ſervice by our examples; and aſſiſt in counteracting that univerſal proffigacy which is deſtroying all our public and private virtues. Vice has her aſſociations in every ſtreet: under various denominations, there are public nurſeries of all kinds of profaneneſs and iniquity. Our youth, after a trifling and ſuperficial education; after exchanging their prejudices abroad, for foreign principles and foreign infidelity—if any thing be wanting they may there be perfected in iniquity.——Speak to theſe people of religion. You, who have ſpent your thouſands in the education of your ſon; and who ſee no effects of it; but that he can utter trifling things in the trifling language of a neighbouring country; ſpeak to him of the offices of religion, and aſk him to go to church; he will ſmile at your folly, and haſten to thoſe temples of vice. If the old ground of myſteries and creeds be not tenable, or fit only for the common people, why ſhould it not be quitted for better? Becauſe our youth can laugh at our prejudices———are they to run into deſtruction for want of ſome means of putting them frequently in mind of their moſt important duties? In our preſent ſituation, we ſhould deſert the outworks, and fly to the citadel; for the enemy is there already.

It may be ſaid—that if we confine our public ſervices to the moſt important moral duties, they are ſo well underſtood, that

it would not be worth while to attend a public ſervice in order to have them diſcuſſed. I am far from thinking that men who devote their time to the purſuits of knowledge, may not often furniſh reaſons of a wiſe and moral conduct which may be new to the moſt intelligent of their hearers. But ſuppoſing this were not the caſe; our diſpoſitions and conduct, good or bad, are produced by habits; not by principles. If we are ſo circumſtanced, that we generally hear only the apologies for vice, we become vicious; and to make us virtuous, it is neceſſary that we ſhould not only underſtand the propoſitions of moral philoſophy, but that they ſhould be frequently laid before us. What is the reaſon that wiſe men act fooliſhly; and good men wickedly? Not for want of knowledge; but very often becauſe the reaſons of a good conduct are not always obvious to their minds. If public worſhip were only a recital of the moſt common obligations; it would be of the utmoſt uſe—in giving a habit of thinking juſtly; and a kind of ſecurity againſt many of the temptations of vice.

It is to anſwer ſome of theſe purpoſes, that the liturgy we have now uſed is offered to the public. It is a ſpecimen of that kind of public ſervice which is exceedingly wanting. Not one in five, perhaps not one in ten, in this enormous town, goes with any decent regularity to a place of public worſhip. The people in general have no reaſon to give, but the examples of thoſe who are wiſer and better than themſelves. The perſons who give the example, alledge objections againſt the eſtabliſhed forms, as being full of myſteries and creeds; and againſt the diſſenting method of worſhip, as a faint and inſipid reſemblance to the enthuſiaſm

thuſiaſm of thoſe times when the diſſenters imagined their effuſions were uttered by the holy ghoſt. Attempts have been made to reform eſtabliſhed cuſtoms; but they have proved fruitleſs. the only thing left is to endeavour to aſſiſt them, by providing for thoſe circumſtances to which they are not ſuited. Many thouſands might be benefited; prevented from falling into vices, and aſſiſted in forming habits of virtue———by ſuch a public ſervice as we have read; who would not, and perhaps could not, attend any other. If reſpectable ſocieties were formed on the pure and ſimple principles of morality, the advantages would be very great. Even thoſe perſons who adhered to the old eſtabliſhments would find their account in encouraging ſuch ſocieties, as they might be pointed to as proofs, that men may drop their prepoſſeſſions concerning myſteries and creeds, and yet retain ſufficient and indiſputable reaſons for every duty to God and man. It would be the immediate object of ſuch ſocieties; not to reform other religious ſects, but to aſſiſt them in preventing the public ruin. Religious aſſemblies and churches may not want reformation while their people are ſincere. It is that vaſt multitude who attend no church, and have no religion, which ought to be reformed.

With theſe views, and only theſe, the preſent form of worſhip is offered to the public. We hope to avoid contention with religious parties; we want not to reform them; we want not to interfere with them: we wiſh to aſſiſt them in what ſhould be their principal deſign, improving the minds and manners of the people. They are in poſſeſſion of their flocks; we would purſue none, but thoſe who are out of all incloſures.

We have no deſire, however, to ſeparate ourſelves from good men of all denominations; of all religions; and of all nations. We have endeavoured to compoſe our form of devotion, ſo as to admit every honeſt man in the world to join us; and we could wiſh all good men had ſo much liberality as to conſider this method of joining in a general ſervice, as a proper preparation for that heavenly world, where they muſt ſuppoſe, that all diſtinctions of parties will ceaſe; and that all honeſt men, of all Chriſtian denominations; all good Deiſts, Jews, Turks, and Heathens, ſhall unite in one form of worſhip, and be animated by one general principle of benevolence. In the preſent ſtate of the world, education, cuſtom, the laws and ordinances of ſociety, form us into parties. We ſee, however, that there are general duties and ſentiments, which ſuit the whole world; and which are the ground of that nobleſt of all human affections——Univerſal Benevolence.

If we extend our imaginations to heaven; or to any world ſuperior in excellence to ours; and ſuppoſe its glorious inhabitants aſſembled to worſhip God:—can it be on any of the defective and narrow plans for which we now contend; and not on thoſe general principles in which every creature of God can join?—We ought at leaſt occaſionally to engage in ſuch ſervices as may unite us to all our brethren; and if we ſhould all meet in Heaven, prepare us to receive with affection good men of all opinions, and of all nations; and to join them with pleaſure in the worſhip of our common Creator.

LECTURE II.

WISDOM. PART I.

The wiſdom of this world is fooliſhneſs with God.

WE ſhall not make uſe of theſe words to countenance any ſpecies of ignorance, folly, or vice. They have been applied artfully enough to the diſparagement of philoſophy, on a compariſon with the myſteries of religion: and they may poſſibly have given riſe to a principle which not only all denominations of Chriſtians; but pretended Deiſts and philoſophers have adopted; and which lays the mind open to any abſurdities and follies: that is, that the will of the Deity, and not his wiſdom and goodneſs, is the principle of his actions; and that, in the unlimited conſciouſneſs of this will, he may have given one ſet of laws to nature in this ſyſtem of the univerſe; another to another ſyſtem; and ſo on, *in infinitum*: ſo that what is wiſdom in one region, is folly in another; and what is virtue in one is vice in another. The conſequence of this would be, that no attributes could be aſcribed to him; and he could not be ſuppoſed to be either wiſe, or good, or happy.

When weak and vain men go beyond the limits of real knowledge, there is no abſurdity and impiety too great to be admitted by

by them: they are like perſons of diſordered conſtitutions, who dream extravagances, and are moſt ſublime and out of nature when the paroxyſm of their calamity is at the higheſt. It is abſolutely impoſſible for a man to know more of the will of God than he ſees in the laws of nature; which are wiſe and good indeed, but permanent and invariable. All imaginations and ſuppoſitions which are vainly and ignorantly pretended to be beyond theſe, are at beſt plauſible deceptions: they are generally the remains of metaphyſical artifices; which were firſt invented by prieſts, to ſkreen their lucrative dogmas, and which the preſent degree of moral knowledge has not been able to get rid of. We receive prepoſſeſſions as traditions from weak parents, nurſes, tutors, or acquaintances, who may have been impoſed upon by perſons who had an intereſt in the impoſition; among which the ſtrongeſt, and moſt ſacred, ſeems to be that principle which if underſtood is true and uſeful; and which if miſunderſtood is falſe and pernicious—that the Deity does whatever he pleaſes; and that his will is the law of univerſal nature. Men who have pretended to have communications with him, have given riſe to the pernicious doctrine of a principle in the Deity analogous to the will of man, and diſtinct from the immediate and unerring determinations of his wiſdom and goodneſs. They have ſaid, that God acting at pleaſure, created this world, formed its laws and inhabitants; and that ſeeing his firſt intentions were not anſwered, or finding his will altered, he wiſhed to introduce a better ſyſtem; and fixed on them to introduce it. A very obvious objection aroſe, that God, acting at firſt from the determinations of wiſdom, could not be ſuppoſed to be under the neceſſity of altering his deſigns. The anſwer was———it muſt be impiety to ſuppoſe that

the Deity acted otherwiſe than according to his pleaſure; and that it was his pleaſure alone which gave the denomination of wiſdom fitneſs or goodneſs, to ſuch arrangements as we might call the laws of nature. This is very plauſible; and even abſolutely convincing, when it is taken for granted that theſe perſons ſpeak by his inſpiration; and know from him, that the laws which govern the world here are only relatively uſeful, and to be made and unmade at pleaſure. Thoſe who are thus in the ſecrets of Heaven; or who have the happineſs of being informed by ſuch as are, muſt admit this doctrine with all its conſequences. In that caſe, attention to nature; a deduction of facts which form principles; the natural origin and rules of human actions; the firſt elements of morality and policy; the diſcovery of the univerſal principles which actuate the world, harmonize all its parts, from the ſimpleſt atom to the ſublimeſt intelligence; the end of which is univerſal virtue, univerſal happineſs, and univerſal praiſe to God:——all this muſt be fooliſhneſs; for every thing is reſolved at once into the will of the Deity, which he deigns now and then, according to his pleaſure, to communicate to ſome of his favourites; and which they will deign, for ſome valuable conſiderations, to communicate to thoſe who will attend to them. All the purſuits of knowledge, virtue, and happineſs are reſolved into a traffick with theſe miſſionaries; into the art of committing their dogmas and leſſons to memory; and into an implicit obedience to their directions and precepts. Here the wiſdom of this world muſt truly be fooliſhneſs; and it muſt be the duty of every devotee to decry it—But where impoſture has loſt its dominion, many of its principles ſtill have an influence. Drive a meer religioniſt from one poſt of abſurdity to another—

ther—he finds ſhelter at laſt in what he calls the will of God; from thoſe who dare not deny, there is any ſuch will known to us, but what is to be found in nature. He reaſons and acts on his own principle. But what ſhall we ſay to thoſe who are for flying in all their abſurd diſtreſſes to the ſame ſhelter, without having the ſame pretence? How comes a Deiſt to think of the will of God, as any thing diſtinct and different from thoſe determinations which we find governing the univerſe? He cannot pretend to inſpiration; for the principle on which he becomes a Deiſt, is the great improbability or rather impoſſibility that any ſuch thing ſhould ever take place—But he ſuppoſes and he imagines, and he does not doubt, but the Deity may do as he pleaſes; and that the ſame Being who gave laws to this part of the univerſe, may give different and oppoſite laws to other parts of it. Such a man is in the ſituation of thoſe weak people who not having ſtrength of mind and induſtry enough to do their own buſineſs, are eternally, idly, and miſchievouſly employed in minding that of others. The ſyſtem of the univerſe, in which we have the happineſs of being placed, would employ the attention of man to eternity: all his wiſdom, and all his happineſs ariſe from an inveſtigation of its laws. What idleneſs and folly in ſuch a man to attempt to go out of nature, and to ſuppoſe or imagine what in itſelf muſt be abſurdity and folly! It is of the utmoſt importance to real philoſophy and morality to confine men to what they may know; and to keep them within the limits of nature; as it is of importance in ſociety, to keep every man to his own buſineſs, where alone he can be uſeful. What men ſay may be poſſible with God, out of the limits of this univerſe, I would never deny. The reverence due to the Deity is ſuch, that we are careful

of

of denying any thing which is decently aſſerted of him. The part of real devotion is warmly to adore him where we ſee his determinations; and where we do not, to obſerve an abſolute and reſpectful ſilence. Thoſe who have not that command of themſelves, and who knowing little, ſuppoſe and imagine of him through all the circle of poſſibility, we muſt look upon with candour and compaſſion, as children who may be indulged with amuſements, while they are incapable of more ſevere and more ſerious employments.

It is of the utmoſt importance that we ſhould confine our knowledge within its proper limits; which are thoſe of nature; the truths of which will employ man to eternity; and in proportion as they are diſcovered, will baniſh out of his mind all reveries relating to thoſe parts of the univerſe from whence he cannot poſſibly have any information. The real diſpoſitions of the Deity, which he will more and more diſcover, as he advances in real ſcience, will raiſe him above the vanity and blaſphemous impertinence in imagining and ſuppoſing diſpoſitions the effects and evidences of which he never could have ſeen. Every pretence therefore, in thoſe who are not immediately inſpired by God himſelf, for diſcrediting the proper knowledge of man in this world, by comparing it with what may be deemed knowledge by ſuperior beings, or by the Deity, is made by vanity or ignorance. That the higheſt degrees of human wiſdom are extremely inconſiderable, if we could compare them with the wiſdom of the Deity, is true; but it muſt be by a very ſtrong figure of ſpeech, that even a poet might call them folly. Human wiſdom, when real and natural, is formed by ſtudying the effects of the divine; it becomes of the ſame nature; and in its ſmall proportion has the ſame effects;

for it is by attentively contemplating nature, where the beſt means are ever uſed to obtain the beſt ends, that man acquires all the wiſdom he can ever poſſeſs, and which he will employ, according to his very limited capacity, in the ſame manner with that of the Deity.

It is in conſequence of employing our thoughts on the wiſdom and goodneſs which are every where to be found in the works of God, that we acquire moral principles. Morality, the proper ſcience of man, may therefore be truly ſaid to be wiſdom, even in the eſtimation of the Deity. The ſciences, commonly ſo called, natural and experimental philoſophy, mathematicks, logick and aſtronomy, are ſteps to the great and univerſal ſcience of morals; which furniſhes the only real permanent principles of ſocial and civil inſtitutions; and produces all the happineſs which the world can enjoy. It is in conſequence of drawing theſe channels from their proper and uſeful directions that the words of the apoſtle become applicable to the wiſdom of this world. For even ſciences, which might be extremely uſeful and worthy of purſuit, become fooliſhneſs when directed to no end; or when the perſons who are engaged in them, have no object but the fame which may ariſe from induſtry and ſucceſs in their purſuit; or the ſpurious, unnatural, recompence, which is called ſcientific pleaſure. This, however, is the juſt reproach of modern knowledge; and the wiſdom of this world may be truly ſaid to be fooliſhneſs with God. In the more enlightened periods of antiquity, the moſt reſpectable of all denominations, that of philoſopher, was never applied but to men who loved real wiſdom; it was not proſtituted to thoſe mutilated mon-

ſters in the ſcientific world, whoſe minds have but one faculty, that of memory, and who employ that faculty on the *minutiæ* of nature; and when they are gorged with facts from earth, and ſea, and air, are hardly of any uſe in all thoſe deſigns for which a reaſonable man muſt have been ſent into the world.——You will obſerve, I do not ſpeak againſt all diſcoveries of facts, and all the uſe of memory; but againſt the improper application of the words philoſophy and wiſdom, to purſuits, which are only the elements of ſcience, and which are reſpectable and uſeful only, when they contribute ſomething to the improvement of that great and univerſal ſcience, morality, which alone can make men happy.

Let us conſider any of the ſciences ſingly, and we ſhall ſee the truth of what I aſſert. The diſcoveries of natural hiſtory are the firſt diſcoveries of man. He cannot open his eyes without obſerving that the earth is covered with a variety of objects; and, under the guidance of reaſon and experience, at the ſame time that he ſees, enumerates and claſſes them, he finds his convenience in their uſe. Experiments on their nature, relations and qualities are the conſequence of this attention, and they increaſe his knowledge of thoſe qualities, which he applies to his uſe. The ſciences of numbers and quantities, which are called arithmetick and mathematicks, are unavoidably attended to by a ſocial being; and the convenience ariſing from the knowledge of them in the exchange and adjuſtment of property are not eaſily to be enumerated. The diſcoveries of aſtronomy are among the moſt honourable and uſeful to the human mind; they have opened it to the ſublimeſt ideas we have of God; to an enlarged view of his works; and aſcertained thoſe prin-

ciples in nature, the effects of which, in ignorant minds are ſuperſtition, unmanly fear, and the numerous train of vices which ever flow from ſuch diſpoſitions. Ever ſacred be the memories of thoſe men who in theſe ſeveral branches, have ſo eſſentially ſerved the world! It is with regret that every real lover of knowledge and of mankind will animadvert on the injury ariſing from the ſciences they improved, when not directed to the end which they muſt have been intended to ſerve.

It appears ſtrange, at firſt view, that when men have aſſociated in communities; and when public morality, liberty and happineſs have given riſe to the ſciences, and been increaſed by them for a time——that the advance and progreſs of knowledge ſhould not always be attended with their natural effects, the increaſe of the publick proſperity and happineſs. Are there any paradoxes in nature more glaring than thoſe which we may exhibit from a ſimple detail of known facts? There are whole nations now exiſting who afford every encouragement which can be wiſhed for, to ſeveral purſuits of knowledge, whoſe people are abandoned and wretched; and who, while the ſciences are greatly improved in their academies and ſocieties, are gradually ſinking into barbariſm and ſlavery. While it is an invariable principle in nature, that knowledge produces virtue, we ſee it every where ſurrounded by, and even aſſociated with vice; ſilent at the menaces of brutal power; and even the ſervile inſtrument of oppreſſion and miſery. How comes this to paſs? It is owing to an error, which in proportion as it prevails, will ever make ſcience injurious inſtead of being beneficial to the world; that of ſeparating its branches, and giving them

them no general and united effect. Could the vigorous and manly ſpirits of a Socrates, a Xenophon, or an Ariſtides, look down on the enervated ſlaves who now wear the badges of philoſophy, would they admit their pretenſions, or own them of that illuſtrious order, which while it improved, always benefited and bleſſed mankind?—It is now poſſible for a man to be a natural philoſopher, a mathematician, an aſtronomer——and to be a bad, contemptible man—to be uſeleſs to his country, and to mankind. When men become ſo debilitated and contracted in their mental powers, as to purſue the ſciences for themſelves, and not for any benefit which they may be of to ſociety; they ſhould loſe the name of philoſophers; for wiſdom is the principle of virtue; and they may be converted into ſervants of good and evil, according as they may be employed.

I know I am ſpeaking in direct oppoſition to the preſent faſhion in philoſophy, which is wholly converſant in facts; and which looks with ſupercilious contempt on trite principles of morals, and the uncertain and fluctuating laws of policy and government. You may every day ſee a votary of this philoſophy loaded with his facts, not only partaking largely of thoſe unhappy infirmities which plague and teize the hearts of men; but ſubmitting to indignities and injuries from power, which a Greek or a Roman, in the virtuous periods of ancient wiſdom would have ſacrificed a thouſand lives rather than have ſubmitted to. Where is the uſe of this man's knowledge? It amuſes him; it keeps him innocently employed, and out of danger: but it keeps him out of his province as a man; who loſes every moment of his time which is not directed

rected to leſſen the miſeries and to increaſe and ſecure the happineſs of the world.

Morals therefore are the proper ſcience of man; that which all other ſciences ſhould ſubſerve. When facts, which are the materials and elements of wiſdom, are improved into principles, and increaſe the order, harmony and happineſs of the world, they are uſeful, like the materials of a building combined and diſpoſed for our convenience; but when they are collected for themſelves, they are uſeleſs and worthleſs heaps and collections of ſtones and wood, which encumber and injure the ground they occupy.

Let us endeavour, as far as our little influence reaches, to recover the loſt credit of morality, the ſublimeſt, the moſt important, and moſt uſeful ſcience of man: let us look on the diſcoveries of the elementary branches of knowledge; the facts of natural hiſtory; the truths of mathematicks and aſtronomy, as means to be uſed by the underſtanding, and not as the ultimate objects of it. Let us deſpiſe that tame apprehenſion, which confines inferior ſpirits to the ſecure paths of facts and experiments; and makes them, like unfledged birds, afraid to truſt the aerial region of intelligence. Let us combine all circumſtances and truths into principles; and by ſeeing not detached and minute portions of God's works, but the diſpoſitions which actuate them, acquire a wiſe, a virtuous and good character ourſelves: we ſhall then advance in virtue as we advance in knowledge: ſocieties will ever feel our increaſing influence: ignorance, vice, ſlavery and miſery will fly before us: and mankind will be happy, for the only reaſon which can make them ſo, becauſe they will be truly wiſe.

LECTURE

LECTURE III.

WISDOM. PART II.

Socrates autem primus philoſophiam devocavit è cœlo, et in urbibus collocavit, et in domos introduxit, et coegit de vita et moribus, rebuſque bonis et malis quærere. Tuſc. Queſt. lib. iv.

THE obſervations which were made in the laſt lecture, on the comparative importance of the ſciences, cannot well be confirmed by higher authority than by that of Cicero; who, ſpeaking of the ancient philoſophy, ſays, that till the appearance of Socrates, it was converſant principally in thoſe imaginary numbers from which things were ſuppoſed to have ariſen, and into which they were expected to be reſolved: by theſe they endeavoured to calculate the magnitude of the ſtars, their diſtances from each other, and their revolutions: "Socrates," he ſaid, "was the firſt who "brought philoſophy down from heaven; placed her in com- "munities and cities; introduced her into families; obliged her "to attend to the concerns of human life, and to what was "good and evil in morals."

If we attend to the conduct and fate of Socrates, we ſhall have ſtriking views of ſome important differences in the ſcien-

tific

tific purſuits of men; and may ſee ſome of the reaſons why common minds obtain fame and glory in the elementary branches of knowledge, or in the arts; while only now and then a ſuperior and divine mind attempts to combine all facts and enquiries into principles which may regulate ſociety, and make men, in all conditions, reſpectable and happy. The whole circle of the elementary ſciences had been traverſed: the fragments of ancient mythology; the fables, poems and hieroglyphicks; the treatiſes of geometry, phyſick, and the ſpecimens of their arts which remain, give us reaſon to ſuppoſe, that the ſeveral nations of antiquity had made diſcoveries very ſimilar to all thoſe which we have made, and many to which we have yet nothing analogous. All our refinements in metaphyſicks, and even in theology, have originated in Greece; and the various orthodox and heterodox denominations which have agitated the Chriſtian world; the imagined truths of one party, and the pretended errors and blaſphemies for which others have been harraſſed and perſecuted, are only the ſpeculations of the ancient philoſophers and ſophiſts tranſlated into modern language, aſſimilated with modern ſyſtems, and revived with all their deceitful and miſchievous conſequences.

Imperfect and uncertain as the informations of hiſtory may be ſuppoſed to be, as to all the ſecret cauſes which produce events; yet notorious circumſtances, which could not well be concealed, and could not be generally miſrepreſented, may enable us to compare different periods in the ſcientific and moral annals of the world. The ſtate of knowledge in the time of Socrates makes it

very probable to a man who can trace events to their neceſſary cauſes, that the ſeveral ſciences were purſued in the manner they now are, as ſeparate and diſtinct objects, and not as means leading to one univerſal and beneficial end. The ſlight and ſcanty informations of hiſtory would confirm ſuch an hypotheſis. Thales had ſpeculated and made experiments on water. He and his diſciples drew it from all ſubſtances, and probably gave it ſeveral philoſophic names, as it petrified into ſtones, vegetated into herbs and flowers and trees, aſſumed the form and ſubſtance of animals, ſublimated into a human ſoul, and by undergoing infinite proceſſes, conſtituted the nature and ſupreme intelligence of the Gods, and bleſſed and ruled that univerſe, conſiſting only of various modifications of water. Theſe form the firſt order of ſpeculative philoſophers; and modern fabricators of worlds, and aſſayers of elements muſt ever look up to them with aſtoniſhment and deſpair.

The ſpeculations and experiments of Anaximenes were upon air: he extracted it from every thing; he changed and modified and purified it, till he became ſo enamoured, that he pronounced it to be God, immenſe, infinite, almighty, the ſoul of the univerſe, and the principle of all intelligence and all happineſs. The diſciples and followers of this philoſopher were numerous, and continued in credit for ſome ages.

But the general effect of philoſophic ſpeculation was the opinion, that the element which was anciently called ether, and which we now call electric fire, was the univer- -inciple. It -robably ſeen to pervade all parts of nature, and ap- -d like

the immediate cauſe of all motion and life. It was beneficent in the ſun; it was ſometimes miſchievous in lightning: all the good and evil in the world was allotted by it: it was therefore pronounced to be God; called Jupiter, and adored by all the world. We accordingly find fire to have been the univerſal emblem of the Deity; and the ſucceſs of the very ancient Magi, or perhaps much more ancient experimental philoſophers, on fire, to be much greater in raiſing their element to be a Deity, than that of thoſe who applied themſelves to air and water.

In this manner, ſciences, which were more obviouſly uſeful than the ſpeculations we have juſt mentioned, were carried to a degree of perfection beyond what we have any conception of. We are now in geometry and in phyſick the diſciples of the Greeks; though we have only ſmall and ſingle treatiſes of theirs on the ſubjects. A man is thought fully qualified to ſave the lives of his fellow-creatures, if he can only read Hippocrates; and a geometrician if he can go through the whole of Euclid. I do not mean to draw ſuch a compariſon between ancient and modern learning as I would maintain to be an accurate one. Indeed, ſuch a compariſon cannot be made, as we have not ſufficient materials in the remains of antiquity. I only wiſh you to recollect that at the period to which I would refer you, when Socrates attempted to reform the morals of the Athenians; their proficiency in thoſe purſuits which we call the ſciences, had been equal, perhaps ſuperior, to any that has been ſince made; and that ſpeculations and philoſophical diſcoveries, which cannot be

made ſubſervient to private or public virtue, or which are inconſiſtent with them, are, inſtead of being uſeful, extremely injurious to the world. Philoſophers of all deſcriptions, who are not engaged in purſuits which will terminate in the moral benefit of the world, are only monks and friars, whoſe ſupport is a charge on the induſtry of the publick.

Socrates appeared, when all the branches of learning came under this deſcription. The ſciences and the arts were greatly encouraged—and an univerſal profligacy of principles and manners prevailed. Every branch of philoſophy was taught in ſchools; and the ancient ſophiſts were as numerous as our modern literati. When Socrates drew the public attention, and directed it to morals, an univerſal aſtoniſhment and indignation were excited. He ſaw the pernicious tendency of detaching men from their proper ſtations in the community, and forming them into uſeleſs philoſophical claſſes, where their time was miſemployed, and their underſtandings perverted by refinements and quibbles; and where inſtead of acquiring that manly and virtuous character which was of eſſential ſervice to the publick, they were enervated, and rendered ſupple ſlaves of any power which might chance to command them.

Theſe ſophiſts, however, being proficients in the ſciences, were in great credit with a people whoſe morals they had helped to corrupt: and their progreſs in knowledge having no influence on their diſpoſitions and characters as men, they were not raiſed above the common ſelfiſh and vicious motives which actuated the

moſt ignorant and immoral of the people. Every ſophiſt, inſtead of ſupporting the original and genuine character of a philoſopher, was an empyrick, who ſold his mental remedies at the higheſt price he could make of them. Such a man became neceſſarily the friend of ignorance and corruption. Inſtead of attempting to improve the people, in order to make them happy, it was his intereſt, and it was therefore his wiſh and his ſtudy, that they ſhould remain ignorant and vicious, in order the more implicitly to admire his ſophiſtry, and the more readily to pay for it, or to conſent that he ſhould be maintained and made rich, at the expence of the publick.

This will ever be the invariable progreſſion of the ſciences, when they are purſued as ſeparate objects, meerly for ſcientific pleaſure. After they have diverged from a certain line, and their votaries are become diſtinct claſſes of beings, they gradually refine, till each terminates in ſome ſpecies of ſophiſtry, quackery, and miſchievous impoſture. Thus mathematicks degenerate into enigmas; chymiſtry becomes alchymy; aſtronomy, aſtrology; and theology, myſtery: and thus all ſcientific means of improvement convenience and happineſs, are the inſtruments of mean impoſture, to corrupt and injure the people. It was to this kind of impoſture that Socrates oppoſed himſelf; and by the artifices of it he fell. Socrates taught for nothing—This was a mortal offence to the ſophiſts and prieſts. He brought back the ſciences to their firſt ſimple principles; and ſhewed their uſe in ſubſervience to the univerſal and ſupreme ſcience of morals; the art of making men in all ſituations and conditions truly virtuous

and happy. This was treaſon againſt all the orders of a community, which was ſinking into real ignorance, by means of refinement in the ſciences; and into ſlavery for want of virtue. The government was ſeized by tyranny; and ſophiſts and prieſts were its tools; the people were weak and deluded; and all united againſt reaſon and virtue in the perſon of Socrates. This oppoſition will ever ariſe between real and falſe ſcience; and between genuine wiſdom and the intereſts of impoſture, ſuperſtition and arbitrary power.

I have inſiſted the longer on this period of hiſtory, becauſe you may not poſſibly have reflected ſo much upon it, as on that which contains the ſufferings and death of Chriſt. No man on reading the books of the Evangeliſts as he would thoſe of Plato or Xenophon, will ever imagine that the deſign of Chriſt was any other than to oppoſe morality to the cabaliſtic learning and ſuperſtition of the Jews. The prieſts, ſcribes, phariſees and ſaducees were the Jewiſh literati or philoſophers. The prieſts were the orthodox miniſters of their eſtabliſhed church; and the adherents, tools, and ſlaves of any power which could guard its doctrines, ceremonies and emoluments: the ſcribes were the lawyers, who have in all ages ſold their genius, ſcience and eloquence to thoſe who would bid higheſt for them; the phariſees were their ſaints; and the ſaducees ſeem to have been their free-thinkers, or rather infidels; for they diſbelieved ſome articles which other Jews deemed very ſacred and important. Among theſe there were always men remarkable for their knowledge in the ſeveral branches to which they applied. But like the ſophiſts

phiſts and prieſts of the Greeks, they injured the publick inſtead of benefitting it by their learning; the end of all ſcience as well of the commandment was forgotten; and under their direction the people were ſinking into ignorance, depravity, and ſlavery. Chriſt pointed his reaſonings, his exhortations and his ſatire againſt theſe impoſtors, who, like all meerly ſcientific men, were juſtly denominated blind guides. He expoſed their pretenſions to knowledge with irreſiſtible arguments, and ridiculed their pretended ſanctity, their affected purity, and their oſtentatious and long prayers, with great ſpirit and great ſeverity. They ſaw evidently that ſuch plain and general principles of morality as Chriſt taught the people, would diſcredit their learning, and their ſuperſtition. They alarmed the publick therefore; for the government and church were in danger: and as Socrates was accuſed of corrupting the youth, by leading them to reſpect the principles of virtue; and this principally by means of falſe learning and ſuperſtition; ſo Chriſt, by the ſame means, was put to the death of the meaneſt felon; crucified between two thieves; for preaching morality to the Jewiſh nation.

In both theſe very remarkable caſes, the benefit to the publick was derived from the death of the ſufferer. If Socrates had been allowed to live the few years he had to remain, the effect of his converſation and inſtructions would have been inconſiderable; and we ſhould hardly have had his name tranſmitted to us. But being called upon with injuſtice and cruelty, to ſuffer and to die; and ſubmitting to his fate with the temper and real ſpirit of a man; employing the ſolemn interval between his ſentence and his death, in

in recapitulating the great principles of his favourite ſcience, and the reaſons of his ſerenity, peace and hope—every word he uttered was engraven upon the hearts of his friends; every one of whom became another Socrates; and by a fervid zeal, and enthuſiaſtic eloquence, ſpread his philoſophy through the world.—So in the caſe of Chriſt, the ſucceſs of his doctrine, the enthuſiaſm of his diſciples, and the prevalence of Chriſtianity, was owing to his death: and ſo ſenſible were the early Chriſtians of this, that by a ſtrong figure, they ſaid the world was waſhed in his blood, and ſaved by his croſs.

The end of real philoſophy hath ever been the ſame, to make men wiſe; conſequently virtuous; and conſequently happy. A man who is not a philoſopher in this moral ſenſe, who cannot bring his learning to be of moral uſe to himſelf or others; is inſignificant, if not an injury to the community. Indeed there is as much abſurdity in calling a meer mathematician, a meer chemiſt, or a meer collector of ſtones and herbs and flowers——a wiſe man or a philoſpher—as to call a creature a man becauſe he happens to have any ſingle feature or property of a human being. The moral character is like the perfect figure of the whole man; and the ſciences are like the ſeparate parts and properties: where they all unite and produce that virtuous wiſdom and philoſophy, adapted to all conditions and aſſociations of men, the effect is beautiful and glorious: where they are ſeen ſeparate, they are imperfect, and their conſequences are never beneficial to individuals or to the publick.

We muſt therefore obſerve the morals of a community to judge of the ſtate of its real philoſophy. Here we may graduate a ſcale, and mark its variations, with as much certainty and truth as that of heat and cold. Modern philoſophers, as they are called, will avoid this teſt as much as poſſible. It is their intereſt to encourage an opinion that wiſdom has no influence on manners; becauſe modern morality reflects no honour on their wiſdom. But we may depend on it, this is philoſophic empiriciſm and impoſture, of which there is as much in ſcience as can be charged on phyſick or religion. The effect of wiſdom is goodneſs, by the cleareſt and moſt certain laws we know of in nature. Every man is virtuous according to his advancement in real philoſophy. Every nation, in the ſame manner, is moral, juſt, honourable and happy, according as it is improved, not in the legerdemain of experiments, not in geometric irrationalities, and infinite multinomials; but in thoſe great principles of order, truth, and goodneſs, by which God governs the world; and in the imitation of which conſiſts the wiſdom and happineſs of men.

It may be proper to obſerve, that the deſign of theſe lectures is to draw your attention to the principles which have been inſiſted upon as conſtituting moral wiſdom; which are acknowledged by all the world; but which, at this time, are taken for granted, and not ſtudied, inveſtigated, or underſtood. Morality or religion may be compared to a tree which has ſpread its branches to the utmoſt extent; in which men, like monkies, play, gambol, contend and quarrel, and are wholly inattentive to its roots, which a thouſand cauſes may be tearing up and deſtroying.

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What men allow, take for granted, or adopt implicitly, is of very little uſe, compared with what they inveſtigate and underſtand. It is with a view to induce you to recur to firſt principles, that theſe lectures are entered upon; to enable you to trace all your religious diſtinctions, like ſeparate branches, into a common trunk or common origin; and thereby to lay the firmeſt foundation for univerſal benevolence: to convince you, that while there may be things in which you may charitably differ, there are others, in which you and all the world are agreed; and that there are more reaſons for univerſal union and love, than for univerſal diſſention and hatred.

As they will be moſtly diſquiſitions on principles, they will have arguments, reaſonings, definitions; a connection, a dependance, and other circumſtances, which will require your cool and ſteady attention; and that not to particular paſſages or a particular lecture; but ſometimes to a great number of lectures.

LECTURE IV.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE DEITY. PART I.

Whom therefore ye ignorantly worſhip, him I declare unto you.

I Do not mean to put thoſe who hear me on a footing with the Athenians, any more than to put myſelf on a footing with the apoſtle Paul; but as circumſtances of ſimilitude may be obſerved in caſes which are otherwiſe diſſimilar; and common men, in ſome characters and actions both good and evil, have trodden even in the ſteps of Gods, I may poſſibly be exempted from the charge of great preſumption in uſing the words of the apoſtle to the Athenians, when addreſſing myſelf to an Engliſh Audience.

The inconvenience of having this charge brought againſt a preacher, who means to ſpeak to the buſineſs and boſoms of his audience, is ſuch as to render it often improper to uſe any text. Thoſe perſons who are ſkilled in the myſteries of verbal criticiſm, and mythological interpretation; who can write pages on a Greek Particle, and deduce doctrines from the equivocations of an Hebrew Word, ſhould never addreſs an audience but from a text; as they do ſufficient honour to themſelves and

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to their ſacred oracles by dwelling on ſyllables and letters, and ſpending years in explaining and preaching on what was ſpoken in a few hours. But a perſon who has the deſire, or the ambition of producing moral effects in the minds of his hearers, after the manner of thoſe philoſophers and thoſe apoſtles who led the ancient world to knowledge and virtue, by alluding to paſſages in their works, may betray ſo much of his deſign as to defeat it, or ſubject himſelf to a kind of ridicule which might prevent his ſucceſs. Theſe conſiderations will induce me often to addreſs you without the inconvenient and ſometimes abſurd cuſtom of prefixing a text of ſcripture. Thoſe of my hearers who are intelligent and candid, will remember theſe things as my reaſons; thoſe who are otherwiſe, will repreſent me with the ſame juſtice and the ſame truth as they do in regard to opinions and doctrines which they declare me at enmity with, becauſe I never mention them. My views are not to be promoted by contentions and quarrels; though it be very poſſible my intereſt may. I regard furious men, even under religious pretences, as wild beaſts; and nothing but neceſſity ſhall ever throw me in their way. All opinions on which men ſacrifice their benevolence and humanity, will not here be very often objects even of reaſoning and animadverſion; they will never be eſpouſed or oppoſed in ſuch a manner, as to cheriſh that diſſocial, unmanly ſpirit of party, which has been already ſo injurious to the religious world. I enter early in theſe lectures, therefore, on the being of a God; and ſpeak to men of all denominations and opinions. "Suſpend awhile your rage; let "metaphyſical difficulties, and the meaning of words be left

" undecided. Give ſome reſpite to thoſe paſſions by which you " injure and torment each other on circumſtances which can " only be brought into the ſuperſtructures of your ſacred " churches: look at their very foundations, and ſee that they be " not either broken up or taken away."

Many zealous Chriſtians, whoſe thoughts and paſſions and tongues are earneſtly employed in controverſies on uneſſential principles, would be angry at being told, that they are doing worſe than loſing their time; that, beſides the injury they do to the peace of their opponents, which is not a very humane or pleaſing effect; they are like ſoldiers who ſhould be fighting for inſignificant out-works, when the very citadel was every moment in danger of being taken. The abſurdities alledged concerning God have been ſo numerous and groſs, both in Heathen and Chriſtian writers, that thoſe perſons who now lead the opinions of a great part of Europe, controvert the firſt principle itſelf; and doubt, if not diſpute, whether there be a God at all. Surely then, there is ſome appearance of merit in ſtepping on this only ground of danger; and a man can hardly be juſtly repreſented as an enemy to the peace of ſociety, and aiming at the ſubverſion of religion, when he ſhews an alacrity and zeal in the defence of thoſe principles without which there could be no religion; thoſe principles which men of all nations and of all opinions agree to be the foundation of all virtue and all happineſs. Perſons whoſe information and knowledge reach only to the neighbourhood in which they

they live, are wholly occupied by the tranſactions of that neighbourhood. Small ſocieties of religious perſons are in the ſame manner confined by their knowledge; and they contend for principles to no purpoſe, unleſs it be to injure and ſpoil their own tempers. The doctrines which diſtinguiſh the ſeveral ſects of Chriſtians are not matters of notice to the preſent abettors of infidelity: even the truth and authenticity of Chriſtianity they conſider as a matter out of queſtion. They have therefore collected all their force of philoſophy, of reaſon, wit and humour, to be employed againſt the Being of God. This is the preſent object and employment of what may be properly called infidelity. There is nothing wanting to introduce univerſal doubt, ſcepticiſm, and ſelfiſhneſs; and to baniſh virtue from the face of the earth; but the eſtabliſhment of the following opinions, which are now diſſeminated throughout Europe——That there is no God; but that all things are brought into being and preſerved by neceſſity:——that ſelfiſhneſs is the principle from which all human actions flow; and that there is no difference between virtue and vice, but what is created by the cuſtoms and policy of human ſocieties. Men of the firſt abilities in Europe are zealouſly employed in propagating theſe principles; and they do it with a force of eloquence which would do honour to a better cauſe. This then is the only ground of religious contention—for here alone, is to be found an enemy worthy to receive a blow from a man. I might very well addreſs myſelf to thoſe perſons, and particularly to thoſe miniſters who are highly offended at my intention of confining myſelf to the being of a God, and the

obvious, eſſential, and natural differences between good and bad actions. I might contraſt the danger and difficulty of my undertaking with the ſecurity and inſignificance of theirs. Where is the difficulty of explaining and inforcing articles of belief which are not diſputed; or where the abilities of the diſputants are contemptible? Where is the danger or the benefit of occupying poſts which the enemy deſpiſe? of contending for principles which thoſe, whom religion has any thing to dread from, never think of? "If you have genius and "knowledge——if you have real zeal——if you underſtand "and regard the fundamental principles of religion——come "upon this ground——Here are enemies who will find you "employment; and here your utmoſt abilities and your utmoſt "courage will be put to the trial. Inſtead of this, you read "over an old tale, that has often tired your audiences; or "you inflame their paſſions on trifles; and render them bi-"gots to the little, petty dogmas of parties, inſtead of giving "them a real and enlightened zeal for principles of great and "univerſal importance. Your youth, in the mean time, are "imbibing, from a faſhionable reading, and a faſhionable lan-"guage, the profligate creed of modern infidelity. Hence the "total ſeparation which has taken place between men of "wit and faſhion, and men of learning and religion; public "preaching has no reference to prevailing principles and man-"ners; and going to church is the practice only of thoſe "poor and weak people, who think that by merely doing ſo, "they ſhall pleaſe God and go to Heaven. Is this the con-"duct of great and wiſe and good men; the reputed meſſen-

" gers of Heaven; or even the delegates of government, to " reform the minds and regulate the manners of the people? " Let it not be ſaid, that while you ſleep, the enemy ſow- " eth tares; or that while you pretend to triumph where " victory is not worth obtaining, a ſelfiſh, profligate, and un- " principled philoſophy is deſtroying virtue, public ſpirit, and " every thing great, generous, and manly in the human mind." In this ſtate of things, a man ſtepping out ſingly as a preacher, a profeſſed advocate for every thing eſſential in true religion, loaded with reproaches from the ignorant, the lazy, the envious, and the hypocritical; approaching the foundation of ſtructures, which are tumbling from their own enormity and weight; facing enemies who have ſkill and ſpirit to deſtroy ——this may be Quixotiſm; but cannot by any art of miſrepreſentation be imputed to miſchievous motives.

That the being of Almighty God is almoſt univerſally without evidence in this land of boaſted knowledge, philoſophy, and religion, is my ſincere opinion, from what I hear and ſee in the converſation of moſt people in it.

Firſt principles in any ſcience, when they have been once laid down, are taken for granted; and ſucceeding generations often loſe ſight of them. This is remarkably the caſe in religion; where principles are ſeldom inveſtigated; and where moſt things are taken on truſt, and committed to memory. No man who teaches a child his catechiſm, thinks of putting him

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in a train of enquiries, which might lead to certain concluſions on the being of a God. He tells him, in the true tone of paternal authority, he muſt believe a God. The child, in abject and ſlaviſh obedience, ſays, he will: he gets the habit of imagining he believes things on the authority of his father, which he has no knowledge or conception of; and thus his faith and his principles are ordered for his life. This is the general method of education. Men are taught principles by authority; and not put into the way of enquiry; and the aſtoniſhing ignorance of the people in general, is almoſt wholly owing to this. When they come to the uſe of reaſon, they employ it not on firſt principles; and while they may be eminent in their knowledge of controverſial diſtinctions, and great lights in their ſeveral churches, they may be ignorant of him whom they worſhip, and Almighty God be unknown to them.

Beſides theſe perſons, who form the body of the people in every nation and religion, there are others in conſiderable numbers, who ſeem to think and enquire for their amuſement; and run round the circle of the ſciences with great rapidity and eaſe. There are fribbles who torment us with their affectation in ſciences, as well as in all ſituations of common life. Theſe perſons with great eaſe tell us, that the evidences of the being of God are ſo obvious, and the objections to it ſo abſurd, that it can require no pains to decide on it—— and that no thinking man can be an atheiſt. I am firmly perſuaded of the being of a God, as I am of my own—— But my perſuaſion is not the effect of authority; it is not the

effect

effect of a careleſs and deſultory enquiry; it is owing to a painful and long inveſtigation. There is no ſubject on which I have had greater doubts to remove; greater metaphyſical combinations to diſentangle, and greater difficulty to raiſe, and as it were to enlarge my mind to adequate conceptions, and to fix ſome clear and permanent ideas. Having read with attention all the principal productions of atheiſm; and believing as I do, from long conſideration and enquiry, that atheiſm is deſtructive of all virtue and happineſs, yet I ſhould ſcorn to reproach an antagoniſt falſely. There are atheiſts of the firſt abilities; men of deep thought, who write and ſpeak on principle; and who would not deign a moment's attention to eaſy and ſuperficial reaſoners on the ſubject of the deity. This is the circumſtance which is alarming. If all theſe triflers, who ſay they know God; who became acquainted with him on a very little enquiry: if they were to go over to atheiſm, and to be the only ſupporters of it, we ſhould be as eaſy as they now affect to be: for we could then truly ſay——There are no thinking men among atheiſts:—But when we ſee perſons of great abilities, whoſe views of nature are extenſive; but whoſe ill health; whoſe misfortunes; whoſe diſappointments, have jaundiced the mind's eye; and thrown a factitious colour to them over the whole univerſe:——when ſuch men plead its cauſe, the firſt ſpirits of human nature ſhould attend; for every thing important to the world is at ſtake. Laws, ſyſtems of religion, conſtitutions and forms of government are trifles to thoſe firſt principles by which the univerſe is held together; and when they are under conſideration, the higheſt and beſt talents of

the world ſhould be brought forward.——I mention this, not only to juſtify my own deſign, but to ſilence thoſe very inſignificant, though very conceited perſons, to whom all ſubjects are clear and eaſy, and who are forward to give their opinions of things which they have not beſtowed a ſerious thought upon. Theſe perſons hardly take the trouble to worſhip God: there is no being in the univerſe to whom they could bow with unfeigned humility and reſpect; I would otherwiſe ſay unto them—Whom ye ignorantly worſhip, him I declare unto you.

It will not be neceſſary here to deſcend into a too minute detail of particulars, and conſider thoſe various ſects who have divided on particular queſtions, and who ſeem to have loſt all juſt and rational ideas of Almighty God. We need only in general ſay, that all thoſe principles which ſuppoſe him to be ſuch as we are, in form or diſpoſition, thoſe which repreſent him as arbitrary, capricious, or cruel, are falſe, and extremely injurious to mankind.

The Greek Fables and Traditions had obſcured the firſt principles of religion which were probably deduced from nature. Superſtition and idolatry had been erected on the truths of philoſophy; and wicked princes and heroes had aſſumed the attributes of Gods. Theſe things could not be unobſerved by ſo enlightened a people as the Athenians. It is probable alſo, that ſome ſpeculative men took advantage of the ſtate of their religion, to diſpute the being of a God. The friends of nature and true religion could not have obviated the arguments de-

duced from the prevailing idolatries, and levelled againſt the Gods which were worſhiped. They therefore wiſely left them to thoſe prieſts, whoſe intereſt it was to ſupport them; and deduced from nature the evidences of the exiſtence of that being, whom they called the unknown God. I could wiſh to draw the attention of my hearers on the ſame ſubject. Let them conſider the ſeveral forms of religion which divide and diſtract inſtead of uniting and bleſſing mankind. Let them examine the attributes of thoſe ſeveral Gods which each ſect hath ſet up at the head of its ſuperſtition. Let them apply the objections of atheiſm to them; and obſerve how they are demoliſhed and deſtroyed. Let them open the ſacred volume of God's works, conſider the obvious fitneſs of every cauſe to produce its effect; the proof which this affords of intention and deſign; the harmony and order which prevails wherever we have clear and perfect views; and the invariable certainty with which virtue and happineſs ariſe to individuals and nations from the laws of this order. Let them go one ſtep; and one ſtep only into the region of analogy and imagination; let them ſuppoſe theſe great qualities—theſe intentions, this deſign, this goodneſs—not to be ſcattered through the univerſe; but to belong to one being who actuates it; and they will know all that can poſſibly be known of God——Beware of truſting your imagination one moment longer. She has ſoared her utmoſt height; and every effort ſhe makes will be towards the earth; and will generate error and abſurdity. You are to glance only, by the utmoſt exertion of your abilities at that Being, who is incomprehenſible; and you are to be ſatisfied with few and general ideas on ſo

great a ſubject. You will then be impregnably fortified againſt all the attempts of infidelity; and if its votaries reproach you with the abſurdity, ill character, and villainy of the Gods, which have led enthuſiaſts and idolaters of all religions, to deluge the world with blood, and to plague and torment mankind, ſhew them in all nature an altar to the unknown God; invite them to hear the univerſal voice acknowledging him; and you will pity the reaſons which may prevent their joining you in a rational and ſublime adoration.

LECTURE

LECTURE V.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE DEITY. PART II.

Who by ſearching can find out God?

THIS may be thought an extraordinary queſtion at a time when religion, the firſt principle of which is the knowledge of God, has undergone ſo many amendments; and meſſengers in great numbers have pretended commiſſions from heaven; ſome from the very throne of the Almighty: nay when a great part of the globe is occupied by Chriſtians; moſt of whom believe that Chriſt is another name for God himſelf; that the Supreme Being who created, who ſupports and animates worlds which ſeem to us innumerable, in indefinite ſpace, wearied as it were with the ineffectual attempts of his ſeveral meſſengers to inſtruct the inhabitants of one of thoſe worlds; left the throne and government of the univerſe; put on the form of man; and devoted thirty years to this purpoſe.——After all, to ſay, who by ſearching can find out God, may be attributed to reaſons even worſe than ignorance or infidelity. The truth is, however, that we could never have been much more at a loſs in any civilized period or country in the world for clear evi-

dences

dences of the being of ſuch a God as a man ſhould adore, than at this time, in this country, and under all our great and boaſted advantages. This declaration may be thought haſty and preſumptuous. There are individuals who have conſidered this matter with great judgment and care; but they are little noticed, and to the world in general unknown; and men diſpoſed to worſhip God, claſs themſelves under ſome of thoſe numerous religious denominations which ſeem to appropriate the knowledge of him to themſelves.

Let us imagine a man in the full enjoyment of his underſtanding; and free from thoſe prepoſſeſſions which education and authority commonly give on this ſubject; let us ſuppoſe him introduced by ſome circumſtances into the preſent religious world, and deſirous to join in acts of public adoration to that univerſal principle, which produces all virtue, all order, and all happineſs. The firſt object that will ſtrike him is the church of Rome. The pomp and ſplendour of its temples; the apparatus of prieſts magnificently habited; of muſic, painting, and ſculpture, convey to him one idea friendly to the pureſt devotion, that of grandeur; and the firſt impreſſions on his mind muſt be in favour of popery. This, by the way is the reaſon why young perſons, eſpecially of the female ſex, who are governed by ſenſibility and taſte, more than by reaſon and judgment, are ſo unaccountably captivated by this religion. But when a man in the vigorous and free uſe of his judgment opens thoſe books where the principles of it are to be found; when he reads the ſentiments which the votaries of it offer up to heaven;

heaven; what can be his thoughts of the object of their worſhip? He would inſtantly ſay, theſe people are in the loweſt ſtage of inſanity; for they ſurely worſhip, inſtead of God, the very principle of evil, the prince of darkneſs. Their ceremonies and ſervices are unworthy of any intelligent, though he were even an infernal being; for they can amuſe only children and ideots; but their principles, by which they make vice virtue, ſanctify every ſpecies of villainy, and convert the moſt atrocious crimes into ſacred and religious duties, they can ſpring from no other cauſe than from having ſubſtituted Satan inſtead of God.

In this manner he would be diſappointed in his views by much the greater part of the Chriſtian world. The reformation would give him ſome hopes of having more ſatisfaction in thoſe countries where it had ſet the human mind more at liberty, and where a ſpirit of enquiry had been excited and encouraged. But he would ſoon obſerve, that the advantages ariſing from this reformation are not ſo great in reality as in appearance.

The difference of doctrines between the Roman Catholicks and the reformers, was a matter of trifling conſequence, in compariſon of that principle in which they were agreed, that a ſet of truths was to be prepared for the people, which they were to believe under pains and penalties. It would not ſignify to me, if the uſe of my judgment and my liberty were taken away, whether I were required to believe tranſubſtantiation, or that two and two make four. The irreparable injury would be com-

committed in degrading me from the rank of a man; and whether I were punished and menaced into error or into truth would be a matter of very little consequence to me. The Reformation therefore, while it afforded a precedent, which may be of use, and has been attended with some advantages, left the great evil which will ever keep the world from making any considerable advances in knowledge and virtue. The religious system, which at the Reformation was substituted for popery, continues to be taught to children, and to be enjoined on the people, under the apprehension of future damnation; and what is much more effectual, with some substantial considerations of profit and loss in this world. The quantity and degree and sort of knowledge are allotted to them as duties are allotted to slaves, not subject to controversy or examination. This is rendered an insult of the most mortifying kind, by the common language and profession in all protestant countries, that the rights of private judgment are sacred; that the Reformation can be defended only on the acknowledgment of those rights; that every man must be at liberty to form his own opinions, and to act upon those opinions in all things relative to religion. Where is the liberty of a man, who in his earliest infancy has his mind filled with principles, which require the consideration of his matureſt judgment; who is enjoined to believe them; or told that he must forego the love of his parents; the attachment of his family, the respect of his acquaintance, with the many satisfactions and conveniences attending those circumstances? His friends shew him the various paths which lead to usefulness, to honour, to riches, and to the indulgence and gratification of those affections

which

which ſtimulate a man into activity, and without which life is not worth having; he is told, and very truly, that all theſe paths are not to be entered until he has configned his underſtanding, and ſuffered himſelf to be inſerted in the community, like a wheel in a machine, the whole movement of which is governed by one invariable principle. And is this liberty?—How then is ſlavery to be defined?—Indeed Proteſtant governments and ſects uſe the language of liberty and toleration; they exclaim againſt the barbarous cruelties of the Church of Rome; they ſay, "we would not for the world beguilty of cutting your "throats; but we will make it not worth your while to live, "and then it is to be hoped you will ſave us the diſhonour, and "cut them yourſelves."

I am apt to ſpeak harſhly, when I mention intolerance; becauſe there is no principle I deteſt ſo much. You will allow that it is with ſome reaſon, as there is none that has ſo general an influence, and is productive of ſo many evils. We ſee it covering the whole earth with ignorance and miſery; ſupporting inſtitutions, forms of governments, and tyrants, which ſport and wanton in human blood. This is owing to that univerſal, but moſt pernicious, cuſtom, which leads people, as it were, to unman their children almoſt in their cradles; to deprive them for ever of the capacity of thinking and acting like men, under pretence of teaching them principles, and ſhewing them the way to heaven. Under this univerſal dominion of ſome deſpot, of ſome conſtitution, of ſome church, or of ſome ſect, the people groan in abject ignorance or wretchedneſs; and it is

a matter of aſtoniſhment, if one man in a million dares to lift up his head, and has the ſpirit (or what is called the madneſs) to aſſert thoſe rights of human nature, without which ſociety is an evil, and not a bleſſing.

In ſuch a ſtate of things, if we lead our enquirer among the parties which form the Proteſtant World, and let him either judge of the God they adore by the general ſpirit that actuates them; or make him conſider their ſeparate principles and conduct, and let him judge of their ſeparate Gods—he will be as much embarraſſed, and as much at a loſs, as ever, in his purſuit.—What! it may be ſaid, Would you inſinuate that we have all different Gods? We may have our little contentions; but we all agree in the belief of one God—This is not true. Thoſe who have never examined, and who take their principles wholly on the credit of others, in order that they may arrive at ſtations of affluence and honour, have no opinions, and cannot be ſaid to believe a God, or any thing elſe. If they were allowed to have opinions on this ſubject, they muſt differ, as their ſects differ; and all ſects differ on ſome circumſtances relating to God. We ſee whole nations, and whole bodies of men, bending before a being, whom they expreſsly ſay, in their very devotions, is unworthy of any regard. He is capricious, unjuſt, cruel, vain, fond of ſhew, ignorant, and deceitful; he admits of compoſitions for a virtuous conduct; and, in ſhort, there is hardly any vice, which is not attributed to him, by the language and practice of his adorers. Theſe differ, as individuals, according as they are more or leſs removed from abſolute ignorance;

rance; and their views of their ſeveral Gods (for they have Gods many) are extremely different from each other. The God of the ſuperſtitious man is different from that of the bold enthuſiaſt; the God of a gloomy zealot is always meditating miſery, and ever maketh darkneſs his pavilion; the God of chearfulneſs and good-nature, though unenlightened and uninformed, is only like his adorer, contemptible, not deteſtable. All theſe objects have no reference to that Being who is the univerſal ſoul and ſpirit of the univerſe; theſe are demons formed by the imaginations of men; and they can be diſpelled only by the general prevalence of enquiry and knowledge.

Let us now turn our attention to thoſe regions of ſpeculation and fancy, which the philoſophers and poets of antiquity have ſported in. I will not promiſe you much more information on the ſubject of our enquiry; but you will have leſs diſguſt; for the ancients, while they ſpeculated, and made fables, kept themſelves in good-humour, preſerved their humanity, and even ſacrificed to the Graces.

In the worſhip of the ancients, we muſt diſtinguiſh two ſorts of divinities, Gods animated and Gods natural. The former are ſaid by antiquarians to have been kings of Egypt and Phœnicia, who by their virtues acquired divine honours; the latter to have been the ſun, moon and ſtars, whoſe worſhip was confounded with that of the others, from a ſimilitude of names, or from a notion that the ſpirits of their heroes inhabited thoſe luminaries. We have reaſon to lament, that the hiſtory of re-

ligion in Perſia is leſs known to us than the groſſer ſuperſtitions of Egypt, Phœnicia, and Greece. For the Magi ſeem to have worſhipped fire, as an emblem of that divinity which pervades and animates all things. They believed it not lawful to have either ſtatues, temples, or altars; and looked upon thoſe who uſed them as fooliſh, becauſe they muſt have ſuppoſed the deity to have human forms. They ſacrificed to Jupiter on the higheſt mountains, calling Jupiter the vaſt expanſion of the heavens. Light, and the principle of beneficence and goodneſs, they called Oromazes; darkneſs, and the ſource of evil, Arimanius. It is impoſſible to underſtand, at this diſtance, the office of a mediator between them, whom they called Mithras. However, it is remarkable, that the feaſt of the nativity of this mediating God was on the 8th of the kalends of January, i. e. the 25th of December; and that the Chriſtians of the Weſt transferred to the ſame day the feſtival of Chriſtmaſs, which before that time had been celebrated in September.

The religion of the Greeks is to us a ſcene of amazing confuſion; where folly and ingenuity, vice and virtue, deformity and beauty, ſeem to be all blended together. On this chaos, the genius of that extraordinary people hovered like a divine ſpirit; and in poetry and in the arts, drew models for the aſtoniſhment and imitation of future generations. Nothing can well exceed the embarraſſment of a reader, who would wiſh to claſs the Gods of the Greeks according to any reaſonable principles of philoſophy or religion. Their mythology conſiſts of hiſtories blended with fables; oriental traditions of diſguiſed Gods who had exiſted, mingled with opinions of phyſical beings, elements,

elements, planets, and ſtars. Sometimes the ſame God is both a real man who has been diſtinguiſhed by his exploits, and the ſun, or ſome element. One while we are pleaſingly amuſed with the metaphorical generations, and at another time with the true and natural ones, of the very ſame Deities.

Jupiter is repreſented with a burning crown, a cloak, the work of Minerva (or Wiſdom) and over all a white robe, ſpangled with ſtars; holding in his right hand two globes, one of gold, the other of amber; leaning with his left on a tortoiſe: on his feet green ſandals, preſſing a nightingale. Theſe ſymbols beſpeak him lord of univerſal nature. There are no hints, at leaſt none that we can underſtand, in the philoſophy of the Greeks, by which we may imagine they could account, on natural principles, for the origin of the heavens. Some of their fables concerning the defeat of the Titans; the prevalence of the youngeſt of them, Saturn, or Time, againſt his father; and the production of another race of Titans, of whom Jupiter was the youngeſt, ſeem to refer to the anarchy of chaos, and the firſt production of ether, or Jupiter, which they conſidered as the governing principle of nature. For the Jupiter of the Greeks could not have been one man; his gallantries laſted four or five hundred years.——Juno (or the air) the conſort of ether, or Jupiter, ſometimes ſerene and beautiful, but often clouded with ſtorms and tempeſts; ſhe is deſcribed as a woman, ſitting on a throne, her head encircled by Iris, the rainbow, her meſſenger.

Janus

Janus ſeems to be the world. Cicero calls him Eanus *ab eundo*, as the world is always in motion. The Phœnicians deſcribe him by a dragon devouring its tail, and turning in a circle; becauſe the world nouriſhes itſelf and turns on its axis. He is repreſented ſometimes with two, ſometimes with four, faces, to denote the ſeaſons of the year. Marcus Meſſala, the conſul, thus ſpeaks of Janus—"He who united the "nature of water and earth, which by their gravity always "tend downward, to that of fire and ſpirit, which by their "lightneſs move upward; and theſe he has confined to the "heavens; and to theſe heavens he has annexed ſuch attractive "force, as unites and binds together different natures and qua-"lities."

Minerva, or wiſdom, ſpringing from the head of Jupiter, ſeems to be a mere poetical allegory, after the Egyptians or Greeks had perſonified ether; and not to have any reference to their philoſophical principles in the creation of the world. So is the nativity of Mars, who is produced by Juno, without the participation of Jupiter.

Venus and Adonis were probably the Phœnician ſun and moon, as Baal and Aſtaroth were the ſun and moon of the Aſſyrians, and Oſiris and Iſis the ſun and moon of the Egyptians. The Greeks, in regard to Venus, did not adhere to the principles of thoſe who had firſt inſtructed them concerning her; becauſe ſhe was worſhipped by the Phœnicians, who came by ſea into Greece, they feigned her as riſing out of the ſea;

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the Goddeſs of pure love; the daughter of Heaven and the Day, or of Celus and the Sea. The Phœnicians were probably the means of introducing the firſt ſentiments of modeſty, delicacy, fidelity, and honour, in the commerce of the ſexes, among the inhabitants of Greece. No wonder then that the moſt delicate ſtrains of praiſe are beſtowed on this favourite Goddeſs. She is repreſented as a young virgin riſing out of the foam, ſupported by a ſhell-fiſh; ſhe ſits on Mount Cythera, where the flowers ſpring up under her feet. The Hours, charged with the care of her education, conduct her to heaven; where all the Gods, charmed with her beauty, make love to her.——This Goddeſs ſeems to have been conſidered by the Greek poets in general as wholly an allegorical being; and to be the mother of Love, or Cupid. But ſome of them had different ſentiments of the origin of this principle. Three things, ſays Heſiod, were created at once, Chaos, Earth, and the celeſtial Cupid, the God; but there is one more modern, the ſon of Venus. Sappho, to adjuſt delicacy of ſentiment to this paſſion, ſays, there are two of theſe deities, the one the ſon of Heaven, the other the ſon of Earth; another is added, born of Night and Ether. Plato ſays, he is the ſon of Riches and Poverty. The Cupid of Sanchoniathon and Heſiod is evidently that natural principle which united the ſimilar parts of chaos; and which by modern philoſophers has been called gravitation. Pſyche was that pervading ſpirit, a portion of which was the human ſoul; which, they ſaid, was wedded to Harmony, or Love, and produced Intelligence and Virtue; and this Pſyche was ever oppoſed by Venus, the Goddeſs of the paſſions.

The Graces were the ſiſters of Harmony or Cupid. They were called Charities, ſignifying joy, pleaſure, good offices, gratitude; young, becauſe they conferred the moſt attractive charms of beauty; virgins, to denote modeſty and purity of manners; they were linked together, as cords of love ſhould bind us together; and danced in an eternal circle, as acts of kindneſs ſhould ever move.

This is a ſhort account of the principal deities of the ancients; where the enquirer is ſometimes perplexed with hints and contradictory circumſtances, and ſometimes delighted with the moſt beautiful allegories and ſentiments. The poets were, in fact, the authors of the popular religion; and they are at all times very dangerous guides; for they amuſe us with a ſong, while they lead us to a precipice. Indeed, religious opinions were not of much effect among the ancients, who ſecured the morals of the people by other means. To us they are of more importance; for we are left to the influence of religious opinions in ſome of the moſt intereſting circumſtances of our lives. Beſides, we profeſs in general to have a reference to another exiſtence after this, which the ancients gave themſelves very little concern about; they were therefore leſs intereſted than we are in the truth and reaſonableneſs of their religious opinions. Their philoſophers, however, made a conſiderable progreſs in their enquiry concerning God; and we ſhould find it difficult to expreſs ourſelves better, on this ſubject, than in the following words of Plato.——"All names "belong to him. You are not wrong, if you call him Fate;

" for he is the cauſe of cauſes, and every thing depends on " him. Would you call him Providence? You fall into no " miſtake; it is by his wiſdom that this world is governed. " Would you call him Nature? You will not offend him " in doing ſo; it is from him all beings derive their origin; " and it is by him they live and breathe." *Plat. Tim. l. x.* In another part of his Timeus he ſays, " The father of this " univerſe cannot be named." And in his Book of Laws, " That we ought not curiouſly enquire what God is. Incor- " poreal, incomprehenſible, not capable of ſenſation." He ſays, " The world, the heavens, the earth, the ſouls of men, the " divinities who teach us the religion of our country, are " God." Cicero conſiders theſe opinions as contradictory and falſe. The moſt calm and ſpeculative of the ancient philoſophers were loſt in this great ſubject; and they differed greatly from each other; but they differed like men, without that rancour and malignity which accompany our religious diſtinctions. It is, however, rather diſcouraging, after having conſidered the opinions which diſtinguiſh religious ſects in ancient or modern times, that we muſt ſtill ſay, with Job—" Who, by ſearching, " can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto " perfection?"

LECTURE VI.

ON THE CREATION.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

WE have already conſidered the being of God as a ſubject of ſpeculation; and, moſt of my hearers will allow, that it is a ſubject that will not admit of much diſquiſition by the faculties of human nature. This is the reaſon that God, in almoſt all ages, has been the creature of the human imagination, and varied according to the variations of that faculty. This is alſo the reaſon that philoſophers, who have ſought out the Deity, not in his works, where alone he can be found, but in the opinions of others, of founders of ſects and of religions, where he is never to be found, have denied his exiſtence, and ſtrenuouſly ſupported the cauſe of atheiſm.

The philoſophers of antiquity ſeem to have been as much ſuperior to us in the power of deduction and ſpeculation, as we ſee their artiſts were in works of taſte. The farther we are enabled by hiſtory to look into antiquity, the nearer we ſeem to approach ſome great æra of knowledge and good ſenſe. Unfortunately for us, we have only the traditions of that æra, in harmonious, but very deceitful, poems. Poets never inveſti-

gate truths, and ſeldom or never reaſon; but they ſometimes ſing of truths which have been diſcovered; and the utmoſt that can be hoped is, that while they embelliſh, they do not miſrepreſent. The period of inveſtigation and knowledge muſt therefore, in the order of things, precede that of poetry and the fine arts; which render ideas and truths ſenſible, and ſometimes improve, while they pleaſe, the people. If we judge by analogy, and ſuppoſe the philoſophers, who furniſhed the principles of Heſiod or Homer, to be as much ſuperior to our philoſophers, as thoſe poets are to our poets, we ſhall have a tolerable idea of that ſtate of knowledge to which I would refer you.—But this, however probable, is only an hypotheſis; and it requires too much knowledge of hiſtory, too much attention to the poetry, and all the arts of antiquity, to render it of any great uſe or effect. Tradition has handed down the actual opinions of ſome of the leaders of their ſects, concerning the firſt principle of religion, and the great Author of nature.

Thales probably learnt in Egypt, that water was the principle of all things, and God the intelligence by whom the univerſe was formed of water; but this intelligence, according to his philoſophy, does not ſeem to have formed the water itſelf.——Anaximander, another leader of a philoſophical ſect, was of opinion that the Gods were born, or brought into being, and died after ſome very long intervals; and that all theſe Gods were the numberleſs worlds which occupy infinite ſpace, and which are produced and deſtroyed at different periods.——Anaxi-

menes was of opinion, that air was the God of univerſal nature; as it pervades and actuates every being and every thing in the whole univerſe; as it is immenſe, infinite, and always in motion; but he denied the eternity and unchangeableneſs of this God; becauſe he imagined it to be produced and to be periſhable.——Anaxagoras, who was his pupil, thought that the ſyſtem and diſpoſition and order and happineſs of this world, were the effects of the power and wiſdom of an infinite being; but he does not think that any being could have made it.——The celebrated Pythagoras is known to have thought that God is the ſoul of the world; and that from him human ſouls were derived, as portions from infinite ſubſtance.——Parmenides imagined God to be the etherial fire, in the form of a crown, or a luminous uninterrupted circle, encompaſſing and animating the whole univerſe.——Democritus ſaid, "God is every thing in "the univerſe." He defined him to be the images and ideas of all ſenſible objects; which are the only things that have exiſtence, and the only circumſtances that affect and occupy the mind. He ſaid, there is nothing eternal, nothing even permanent; as nature, that is, the Deity, that is, the images and ideas of objects, being ever fleeting, and ever changing. The opinions of this philoſopher were revived by Dr. Berkley; and they have been adopted by many, who have perſuaded themſelves to fancy that there is no material world.——Plato ſaid, "The Father "of the univerſe cannot be named; that we ought not curiouſly "to enquire what God is; that he is incorporeal, incompre-"henſible, incapable of ſenſation, and even of wiſdom or plea-"ſure. The world, the heavens, the ſtars, the earth, the ſouls

" of men, the Gods who teach us the religion of our coun-
" try, are God."——Xenocrates admitted eight Gods, of which the planets made five.——Epicurus denied the being of any God. He conſidered matter as divided into an infinity of atoms, in an infinite void; and that by a lucky combination and concourſe, or by ſome principle, like our gravitation, which attracts to each other ſimilar particles, they got together and formed the world.

As to the creation of the world, it ſeems to have been altogether as great an object of attention, as the exiſtence and nature of a God. It ſeems alſo to be a ſubject above the reach of human faculties. This may be the reaſon that ſome perſons have attempted it; for difficulties ſtimulate great and noble minds. Speculative and daring men have never been ſo arduouſly and induſtriouſly employed, as on impoſſibilities. We may derive ſeveral uſeful leſſons from their conduct. We may learn, from their experience, the limits within which the human underſtanding can act; and the truths which are of importance to our happineſs. It is with this view, that, in theſe introductory lectures, I wiſh to turn your thoughts to ſubjects of ſpeculation. I ſhould think my own time, as well as yours, miſemployed, if they were to be continued as ſubjects of our attention. I would hold up the moſt important and moſt plauſible ſpeculations before you, to convince you of their futility. The principles of that morality, or that religion, which I wiſh to fix in your hearts, are not matters of ſpeculation; they reſt on experience, on facts which cannot be diſputed, and which are

capable

capable of mathematical demonſtration. The language of morality is the only language of God—It is clear; it is perſpicuous; it cannot be miſinterpreted, or miſunderſtood; it has no confuſion of dialects; it requires no interpreters; it ſpeaks to the hearts of all created beings; and it will remain the univerſal language of nature, while thoſe eternal principles remain, which hold the univerſe together. In this language it will be of eſſential ſervice to us to converſe with each other; to recogniſe and fix in our minds thoſe principles, without which we are unworthy of the rank and diſtinctions of men; and poſſeſſing which, we poſſeſs every thing eſſential to our circumſtances, and to all the real happineſs we can enjoy. You will, therefore, accompany me a little longer in theſe airy regions of ſpeculation, in order that we may the better enjoy that firm ground which we ſhall preſently tread. Indeed, on every ſubject, we find it neceſſary to pay the price of patience, and to go through a great deal of falſe knowledge, to obtain a little of what is real. I thought it neceſſary to conduct you the neareſt way I could, through the ſublimeſt ſpeculations which have been made on the being of a God, and the creation. I may leave you as ignorant as I found you; that is, juſt as ignorant as myſelf, after taking much more pains than many of you have taken. I know no more of matter and ſpirit, of the manner in which the world was created, than the moſt ignorant of the perſons who attend here; though I have not heard of a treatiſe on the ſubject, which I have not read with eagerneſs and attention. All the fruit which I have reaped, you may probably reap, at a much cheaper rate, by hearing my recapitulation of

their

their opinions; that is, a ſatisfaction which is a very common conſequence of hearing ſermons, as well as reading books, that no man knows more of the matter than yourſelves.

The firſt plauſible ſpeculations we have any account of, concerning the creation, are attributed to the Chaldeans; who were of opinion, that there was a time, when all was water and darkneſs, in which were contained animals of a monſtrous form. The ſea, which they perſonified as a woman, and called Omoroca, was miſtreſs of the univerſe. Belus (which ſeems to be their name for God) clove this allegorical perſon aſunder, and formed the earth of one part, and the heavens of the other; and put all thoſe monſters to death. Then this God divided the darkneſs, ſeparated earth from heaven, and arranged the univerſe; and after the deſtruction of the animals, who could not bear the light, ſeeing the world deſolate, he ordered one of the Gods, who, it ſeems attended him, to cut off his head, to mix earth with his blood, and to frame men and animals; after which he framed the ſtars and the planets, and finiſhed the production of all things. *Beroſus's Frag.*

I have tried to reduce this account to probability, by every art my imagination could ſuggeſt; but in vain—and I have never ſeen an interpretation of it, which was not more abſurd than the account itſelf.

The Phœnicians thought that the firſt principle of the univerſe was a dark and ſpirituous air; a chaos full of confuſion, without

without light, eternal, and of an endleſs duration, The univerſal ſpirit which pervaded it, and was diſſeminated through all its parts, falling in love with its own principles, entered into cloſe union with them; and this union was called love. Hence ſprung a ſoft, chaotic mixture, which was the principle of being. The firſt animals, however, were ſo imperfect, as to be void of ſenſation; they produced others which had ſenſation, who produced others endowed with intelligence, who were named the contemplators of the heavens. Soon after, the ſun, moon and ſtars, ſmall and great, began to appear. The earth and the ſea, being affected by the intenſe heat communicated to them by the ſun, the winds were firſt produced, then the clouds, which fell in ſhowers of rain; and the waters, being exhaled by the ſun, were united in the air; where, joſtling againſt one another, they produced thunder and lightning; whoſe noiſe awakened the intelligent animals, and terrified them ſo, that they began to ſtir in the earth and in the ſea, where they had been hitherto fixed.——This account we have only in a fragment (of Sanchoniathon's) and preſerved by a father of the church, with the purpoſe of expoſing it to contempt. Many of the zealous fathers of the church have not approved themſelves men of integrity and fidelity; and moſt of their accounts now are admitted with great caution. However, we have hardly any hypotheſis, ancient or modern, on the creation of the world, more agreeable to the known principles of natural philoſophy, than this of the Phœnicians; and it muſt have been the effect of more knowledge of nature, than we have ever allowed to that people.

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The Egyptians ſay, That, in the beginning, the heavens and the earth had but one form, their natures being blended together; but being afterwards ſeparated, the world aſſumed that orderly diſpoſition which we now ſee. By the agitation of the air, the fiery particles mounted upwards, and gave the ſun, moon, and other planets, their circular motion. The ſolid matter ſunk downward, and formed the earth and the ſea; whence ſprung the fiſhes and the animals, in the ſame manner as ſwarms of inſects and other animals ſpring, in Egypt, from the earth that has been overflowed with the waters of the Nile. *Diod. Sic.*

The Greeks, though they received their firſt principles of religion from colonies of Phœnicians and Egyptians, were too ingenious not to have a mythology of their own. They ſay, In the beginning, God formed the ether; and on every ſide the ether there was a chaos, and night covered all that was under it; but that light darting through the ether, enlightened the whole world. This is that light which they call the eldeſt of all beings, to which an oracle gave the names of council, of light, and the fountain of life. The proceſs of the creation, according to them, was the ſame which we find in Ovid's Metamorphoſes; which was borrowed by him from the Greeks; which has been ſince borrowed by all the modern fabricators of worlds; and is the moſt rational, conſiſtent, and philoſophical account which we can obtain of this matter.

In all theſe ſyſtems, love, harmony, or attraction and gravitation, unites the principles of chaos; *i. e.* bodies of a ſimilar na-

ture, by a law which we ever obſerve to take place, united together. This union, according to philoſophy, reſults from their mere motion; but Ovid employs a God to bring them together.

We may now compare the opinions of the Heathen World with thoſe which have been adopted by the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Worlds. Moſes ſays, The earth was void, and darkneſs was ſpread over the face of the deep. The ancient philoſophers and poets ſay, That chaos was before all things; then a ſpacious earth, the reſidence of happy beings. Moſes ſays, And the ſpirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. The philoſophers and poets ſay, That Love, the moſt beautiful and amiable of the immortal Gods, arranged the principles which formed the univerſe. Moſes ſays, And God ſaid, Let there be light, and there was light. The ancients ſay, From night, and the violent colliſions of jarring principles, ſprung ether and the day. According to Moſes, God made the firmament, which divided the waters from the waters—And God ſaid, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was ſo. According to the ancient mythology, God parted the ſtrife of chaos by the mere effect of motion and gravitation, and Love united the parts that were ſeeking each other; theſe ſeparated the heavens from the earth, the earth from the waters, and the ether from the more groſs fire; the lighteſt element got into the higheſt region, the air next, the water next; and the earth, divided into

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beds and ſtrata, according to their different weight and gravity, obſerved the ſame laws to its very center.

The ancients were bolder in their ſpeculations than Moſes; for they attempted to account, on natural principles, for the formation of the ſun and the heavens. They ſay, That when the earth was made out of chaos, by the laws of attraction and gravitation, by the harmonious union of all particles of a ſimilar nature, there ſtill remained at the center of the earth an unfiniſhed ſpace, which they feigned to be inhabited by a genius, called Demogorgon. They add, That, after ſome agitation, he burſt out in fire; tore the earth into an irregular form; roſe into the air; got round the world; formed the heavens; took fire with him, and made the ſun.

According to Moſes and the poets, the ſun and ſtars appeared after the formation of the earth; fiſhes inhabited the waters, and beaſts the earth: every thing ſeemed to be in readineſs to accommodate man, who was introduced laſt of all.

We cannot underſtand the proceſs of man's creation, either in Moſes's account, or in that of the ancient philoſophers and poets. It is a ſubject which we have not knowledge enough to form an hypotheſis upon; but which the ancients accounted for, on principles which may be diſcovered in time.

I have not taken any notice of our modern theories of the earth; becauſe they have been either copied from theſe old ones,

or they are ſo abſurd, as not to be worth giving an account of. We cannot learn, in this enquiry, more than in other ſpeculations, many truths which may be of real ſervice to us. It does not appear, from Moſes, or from any of the ancient ſpeculative philoſophers, that they meant to inſtruct us in the production of thoſe materials, out of which we ſee this world has been formed. They ſay, that all the ingredients out of which the earth, the ſea, the air, and the heavens, were made, exiſted in a mingled confuſed ſtate, called chaos. Whether this confuſion had ariſen from ſome convulſion, which had reduced a former earth into a chaos; or whether this chaos had been occaſioned, and held in a particular portion of ſpace, by ſome laws in nature, of which we can have no conception, they do not pretend to inform us. The real difficulty of this ſubject is not, in fact, removed by begging the queſtion in regard to a chaos; for, on the preſent laws which obtain in nature, it is impoſſible to conceive that there ever ſhould have been a chaos. It is a confuſion that can exiſt only in the human imagination. However, theſe various hypotheſes ſhew, that men have ever been in the ſame train of enquiries; and that we are only treading the ſame ſteps in natural knowledge, which all the ancients have trodden before us. We have no ideas to the words creation, or making a world, farther than that of diſpoſing and rendering uſeful materials already made, and endued with certain properties. The utmoſt art and ingenuity of man, and the utmoſt efforts of his imagination, can riſe no higher, than to ſuppoſe matter in one kind of order, connection, form, and quantity; and that power and talents may diſpoſe it into another

another form, and to another uſe. What we call making, or inventing, or creating, means no more than diſcovering what effect, what beauty, or what uſe, ariſe from certain arrangements of materials and qualities.

We have no idea of matter being created, and endued with the qualities which it poſſeſſes. Conceited and ignorant perſons pronounce their opinions, on this ſubject, with an aſſurance bordering on impiety; and uſe words without ideas. But thoſe who have tried the utmoſt ſtrength of great and real capacities, have modeſtly declined giving an opinion, where it was impoſſible they ſhould have any conceptions. As to the actual creation of the materials and principles and qualities of the univerſe, we, who conſiſt of them, and are formed by them, muſt for ever remain ignorant. Ingenious men have therefore meant by creation, the diſpoſition of things from diſorder to order, and from deformity to beauty. If we grant them a chaos conſiſting of all the principles and materials and laws, which will bring the world together, and form it; they will give us a very tolerable idea of the proceſs of creation.

Things have certainly very much the appearance which they might have had, if we could ſuppoſe a certain portion of ſpace, occupied by a confuſed maſs of ſuch materials as form this world; and if we could ſuppoſe Almighty Power immediately employed in keeping this maſs from univerſal diſſipation, till the laws of motion, attraction, and gravitation took place: then, from the motion of this ſubſtance, we can account for the preſent

form

form of the earth; the conſtituent parts of it; the beds, or ſtrata and laminæ of which it is compoſed; the ſubſiding of thoſe heavier matters; the raiſing of water to the ſurface; of the air above it; and of that ether, that pure electric fire, which ſeems to be the laſt and ſimpleſt of our elements.

In the diſpoſition of theſe things, we find, moſt eminently, thoſe qualities which we admire; wiſdom, power, and goodneſs. Theſe qualities uniformly co-operate with each other; we therefore refer them to one great principle, which we call God. Whether this great Almighty Being produced matter, and gave it principles and laws, it would be impious aſſurance in us either to aſſert, or to deny; becauſe it is a ſubject on which we can have no conceptions, no ideas; but that the materials of this world have been brought into ſuch order, and have ſuch effects, either with or without the induſtry of man, as to ſhew wiſdom, power, and goodneſs in the great principle which uniformly and conſtantly actuates it—This we underſtand; and this is the only rational foundation of that reverential regard to Nature, which all truly great and good men have ever ſhewn, and have denominated piety or religion.

LECTURE VII.

THE MERIT OF BELIEVING.

The Devils alſo believe and tremble.

THE moſt induſtrious and orthodox divines are not yet agreed in their opinions concerning evil ſpirits. The miſery we find ſo intimately blended with good throughout the world, is not eaſily accounted for, even by virtuous and thinking men, on the ſuppoſition, that the moral conſtitution and government were given by a wiſe and benevolent Being. It is not wonderful, then, that perſons, unaccuſtomed to a large and comprehenſive view of things, and rendered unhappy by oppreſſion, at the ſame time they traced up all the happineſs they enjoyed to the intention of a good principle in nature, which they called God, ſhould alſo refer their miſery to the contrivance of an evil principle, which they might call the Devil. This opinion was readily taken up by the poets, who have ſeldom been good reaſoners, and whoſe buſineſs has been rather to amuſe and entertain, than to inſtruct and improve, mankind. It is very probable, however, that poets were the firſt prieſts, and among the firſt legiſlators; and that the good and bad Deities, of all orders and ranks, were allegorical; that is, virtues and vices, principles and elements, converted into perſons. The etherial fire ſeems ever to have been

been the principal; and very early called by names analogous to Jove and Jupiter. It is probable, that the other elements were equally honoured, and their concurrence in producing all things adored, as the actions of Gods. We have only broken and imperfect traditions of theſe things. We know not whether they introduced evil principles into the natural world previous to ſome general convulſions, which ſeem to have torn up the ſurface of this globe, and laid every thing in ruin. Several ingenious men have traced the certain remains of volcanos in almoſt every part of every country in the known world. And ſeveral paſſages in ancient authors, which have perplexed and puzzled the learned, are cleared up by the happy diſcoveries of ſome of our preſent natural philoſophers.

The firſt ideas we have tranſmitted to us of evil beings, diſputing the will of thoſe ſuperior and good ones, which we muſt ſuppoſe to be the uſeful elements, are in the extravagant deſcriptions of the wars of the Titans with the Gods; and the devaſtations and miſchiefs occaſioned by Cyclops. We know that the whole ſurface of the earth has undergone changes that muſt have deſtroyed almoſt all its inhabitants.* We now univerſally inhabit places that have been for ages occupied by ſeas; and we cultivate regions that have been maſſes of liquid fire. The wretched remains of numerous and enlightened nations muſt, with their deſcendants, have been reduced to miſery; and their traditions, though at firſt accurate and juſt, could not but ſoon

Vide Woodward, Raſpe, Ferber, Borne, Whitehurſt, &c. on theſe ſubjects.

degenerate

degenerate into ſuch fables as the Greeks found in Egypt and the Eaſt. Here we have have a rational and philoſophical account of the reign of Saturn, and the golden age; the reign of Jupiter, and the interruption of all order and happineſs, by the war of the Titans, and the introduction of general confuſion and miſery. Here, therefore, are the firſt evil ſpirits, which we know of, introduced into the natural world; and on this rational ſyſtem, the mythology of the ancients may be very well explained. The aſtoniſhing effects of general eruptions, might well give the idea of a horrid war between heaven and earth; and particular volcanos cannot be more exactly and more poetically deſcribed, than they are in the ſeveral accounts of Cyclops and Giants.

In the moral world, men have ever been infeſted by irregular and evil diſpoſitions; and probably theſe were allegoriſed by the poets into evil ſpirits, at the head of whom they placed a principal one.——The Scriptures, in this, as well as in many other inſtances, have adopted the popular and poetical language; nay, they ſeem every where to ſpeak of the Devil as a real being, the monarch of a particular kingdom, and eternally employed in defacing and injuring the works of God. It is not my buſineſs, at this time, to enquire into the truth of this opinion. Chriſtian divines, of various denominations, have ſufficiently contended for and againſt the exiſtence of this being; and thoſe who chuſe to enquire into the ſubject, may read their treatiſes. It appears to me, that all the writers of the Scriptures believed there was an actual being, reſiding principally in Hell; but having omnipreſence,

and a power of doing evil, inferior only to that of God in doing good. If we, therefore, ſuppoſe the Apoſtle arguing on this principle, we cannot conceive any thing ſtronger than his declaration on the inefficacy of mere belief, when he ſays, "The de-
"vils alſo believe and tremble—Thoſe beings, who pervade the
"world; ſee the works which they deface; know them to be
"produced by God, for good purpoſes; they diſcern the truths
"which it is their employment to render ineffectual; and they
"behold happineſs, where they are planting miſery. Their
"conviction and faith are in proportion to their knowledge;
"and if faith conſtituted religion, theſe devils would be far
"more religious than it is poſſible for men to be."

The eloquence of the Apoſtle was not, however, ſufficiently powerful, to correct the errors into which Chriſtians were falling. Could he have foreſeen the univerſal prevalence of this principle, and the extreme ignorance and miſery it has occaſioned in the Chriſtian World, he would have aimed, with his utmoſt abilities, to deſtroy it in its firſt origin.

It would be extremely tedious and unpleaſant to enumerate the doctrines, on the belief of which the ſalvation of men has been made to depend. They have varied with the intereſts of thoſe who had the power of forming them. This would have been a very obvious reaſon for doubting and examining them, if the reſource had not been taken away; for men were taught, from their infancy, that he who doubted was damned; and, that he who only believed was entitled to ſalvation. This, for ages,

has been the great ſummary of all religion. Ever ſince Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed in the Greek Empire, under all the forms it has aſſumed, and under every government to which it has been allied, the method of entitling men to the kingdom of Heaven, of qualifying them for lucrative or uſeful offices in the ſtate or in the church, has been by profeſſing to believe, without giving any teſtimony or proof of proper qualifications for their employments, or even any reaſons to imagine, that they underſtood the propoſitions they profeſſed to believe. If knowledge be in a ſtate of general progreſſion, which I think to be a doubtful matter; if governments are relaxing from their deſpotiſm, and things promiſe greater freedom to the faculties of the human mind, which I fear is more doubtful; if, in any future time, men ſhould think for themſelves, ſubject only to power, as the obvious and real means of their ſecurity; how ſtrange will it appear to them, that the whole known world ſhould, for many ages, have ſuſpended the exerciſe of their underſtandings, on ſubjects the moſt important, and moſt neceſſary to their happineſs; that this ſhould have been a fundamental principle of religion and government; and that men ſhould have actually ſubmitted to ſuch conſtitutions, and been the ſlaves of their projectors!

The abſurdity of this appears the moment we allow ourſelves to conſider, what is belief?—We believe a thing, becauſe we ſee it, we feel it, we perceive it, or underſtand it. It is not poſſible for our belief to go further. The credit we give to the teſtimony of another, is quite a different principle from the per-

of our own mind; and has been confounded with it only to ſerve the purpoſes of artful men, in impoſing on the ignorant. The art of believing what is above our comprehenſion and reaſon, and not contrary to it, is a ſophiſm, with the advantage of a jingle upon words, invented for the ſame purpoſes. There is juſt as much good ſenſe and truth, and poſſibility in believing what is above our underſtanding, as in ſeeing what is beyond our ſight, hearing what is out of hearing, or feeling what is totally out of reach. Pious and well-meaning men have been impoſed upon in this matter, by the alarming danger of giving up the firſt principles of their religion. They have not been taught the reaſons for believing in God; why virtue is preferable to vice; or why they have adopted one religion and not another. Having taken theſe things on truſt, and finding them to be eſſential to their happineſs here and hereafter they are extremely apprehenſive of a principle, that ſeems to deſtroy their religion at the very foundation. "We believe there "is a God," they ſay, "but his being is above our comprehen- "ſion: we believe in Jeſus Chriſt; but we do not underſtand "the nature of his being, nor the evidence of his miſſion." Theſe are formidable arguments to minds unaccuſtomed to diſtinguiſh and reaſon. They are childiſh and contemptible to a man accuſtomed to take principles to pieces, and to examine the parts that make them up. "I believe there is a wiſe and powerful "and good Being, who made and governs the univerſe. Be- "cauſe, on conſidering as much of the univerſe as lies before "me, I ſee one deſign, purſued by the wiſeſt means, and to "anſwer the moſt excellent and moſt benevolent purpoſes. Is

"there any thing in this above my underſtanding? It is as clear "and indiſputable as that I ſee an object which is before me." If I proceed, and form to myſelf fancies concerning his being, abode, and manner of acting, I may think I believe them, becauſe they are my fancies: another man may pretend to believe, out of deference to my abilities; but neither the one nor the other can, in truth, be ſaid to believe further than he underſtands.

As to the belief of Chriſtianity, the caſe is exactly the ſame. If I have read attentively the hiſtory of the remarkable period, when Chriſt was ſaid to be miraculouſly born; to have had the ſpirit of God given at his baptiſm; to have preached a new religion, which he confirmed by miracles; to have died as a ſacrifice to expiate ſins; to have riſen from the dead, and aſcended into heaven—If, on maturely conſidering theſe events, I ſee reaſon to think, that they actually came to paſs as they have been related; that no arts have been uſed, by thoſe who had an intereſt in them, to impoſe a ſeries of deluſions on the world; that they ſtand on the ſame ground of evidence as the actions of an Alexander, or a Cæſar, which I believe on the teſtimony of hiſtorians who had no intereſt to deceive; and becauſe the things related of them were poſſible, and even probable:—if this be the caſe, what is there in my believing Chriſtianity, more than in my believing any hiſtorical fact, which I clearly comprehend; and has nothing in it which I ſhould deem impoſſible?—Thoſe who pretend to ſee myſteries in it, and to believe them, talk idly; for no man ever did, or ever could, be-

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lieve a myſtery, any more than he could ſee what was tranſacting in any inviſible world. The complaiſance and deference to authority, by which men are led to pretend to believe what they do not underſtand, and what they are told by others to believe, is like the ſervility of thoſe, who, though their eyes are imperfect and faulty, always ſee as we do, or hear as we hear.

This being the caſe, it is not eaſy immediately to underſtand, why men ſhould ever have been blamed or puniſhed, becauſe they could not believe. Believing is an act of the mind, upon conſidering a fact or propoſition; as ſeeing is an act, in conſequence of turning the eye on an object. Men are influenced, in both theſe actions, exactly alike; by the ſtrength and goodneſs of their natural organs; by their ſituation, and the point of view in which they conſider things. Every object, every fact, and every principle, may appear, in ſome circumſtance, different to different perſons. Why, then, if we puniſh a man for not diſcerning truths as we diſcern them, do we not puniſh him for not ſeeing as we ſee?—There is no diſtinction between theſe caſes, which is founded in truth and common ſenſe: but there is, in the artifices of policy, and the wiles of prieſtcraft. If men be taken early enough, they may be induced to give up the faculties of their minds; but they muſt uſe their bodily ſenſes. The exerciſe of reaſon is not only unneceſſary, but inconvenient and dangerous, under all kinds of deſpotic governments. It has been accordingly reprobated by all tyrants, civil and eccleſiaſtical; heaven and hell have been ranſacked for allurements and terrors; the utmoſt abilities of the human mind have

have been employed to invent tortures, to prevent the uſe of reaſon. No wonder; it is the only ſure and fatal enemy to every ſpecies of tyranny. Men have ever, and ever will be free, in exact proportion as they uſe their underſtandings. We, therefore, find, that civil and eccleſiaſtical politicians have ever diſcouraged enquiry, and the love of truth, as ſeditious, and dangerous to the ſtate or to the church.—Here we have the reaſons of religious cruelty and perſecution; which have hung their infernal clouds, for ages, over the world; under which nothing generous and manly could ever ſpring up; and which have rendered almoſt the whole face of this globe a general waſte, traverſed by rivers of human blood. Here and there the benign lights of philoſophy and truth have lately illumined and gladdened the world. Bleſſed be thoſe glorious ſpirits who have occaſioned it! who have ſacrificed their intereſts and their lives to produce it! Bleſſed be thoſe who ſtill ſtruggle for the freedom of human reaſon, and all the great rights of human nature!—Deſpotiſm, attended by Cruelty and Miſery, has too long ravaged the earth; he has hitherto held his rule by horrors; he now puts on the maſk of pleaſure; and, attended by the Loves and Graces, diſſipates our rational powers, and leads us into ſlavery. The conſequence is bondage, if we are made to give up the uſe of our underſtandings, whether it be by cruelty, or whether it be by diſſipation.

The ſubject of belief, as giving merit or blame, has been ſo abundantly conſidered, in the ſeveral ſtruggles of worthy men, to free themſelves from bondage and ill uſage, that no plauſible

ble argument has been left on the ſide of uncharitableneſs and bigotry, but that which makes a right faith to be the conſequence of being well and properly diſpoſed. It is very true, that a man may diſpoſe himſelf; *i. e.* he may warp and bias his mind, ſo as to make any doctrine or principle ſuit it. But all kinds of pre-diſpoſition, and pre-arrangement, are injuries to the judgment; and it would be as difficult for the mind to determine fairly on a fact or the truth of a principle, when it was ſo pre-diſpoſed; as it would be for a judge to determine fairly in a cauſe, on one ſide of which he was bribed. Truth does not want bribery or corruption; impoſture and falſehood may; and all the ſophiſtry concerning the merit of being diſpoſed to receive doctrines, is only occaſioned by the want of arguments to ſupport a bad cauſe. What we pretend to believe, in conſequence of being pre-determined to believe, may do for a weak, timid wretch, who has given up the rights of humanity; and may procure him ſome degree of lenity and peace from his oppreſſors: but not for a man, who wiſhes to derive his opinions and ſentiments from his own mind; and who feels himſelf the brother, not the ſlave, of any being under heaven.

The ſubject I have now entered upon is ſo copious, that it might furniſh me with materials for many diſcourſes. It has given occaſion to numberleſs impoſtures and oppreſſions; from the tyranny and cruelty of the Roman Eccleſiaſtical Tyrant, to the artful rage, and brutal malignity, of a modern Field-Preacher.

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We may be aſſured, that our believing is meritorious only as it is a proof that we uſe our intellectual faculties in the purſuit of truth; juſt as ſeeing is a proof that we uſe our eyes, or hearing that we uſe our ears; and that the common inſolence, rage, and cruelty, of zealots, on account of faith, is owing to their extreme ignorance, or extreme wickedneſs; for they, in fact, muſt have the leaſt real faith of all mankind. They have taken every thing for granted, without examination or judgment; and have, conſequently, nothing which they truly believe. Their faith the Apoſtle, who was a perſon of great mildneſs, calls the faith of devils; they believe and tremble, under an Almighty Power, which they dread; they believe every thing which is enjoined them, from a fear of damnation; and have no principle, but what may be in common to them with all the evil ſpirits in the univerſe.

LECTURE VIII.

THE FEAR OF GOD.

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom.

THE paſſion of fear is formed in us by cauſes which are well known, and underſtood. It ariſes from a very early ſenſe of weakneſs, and from an apprehenſion, or knowledge, that there are powers to which we muſt ſubmit; who may give us pain; and who may deſtroy us. This paſſion is differently formed in different perſons; and has its peculiar ſtrength and complexion from the original texture of a man's conſtitution; and from the nature of that family government, under which it has been his fortune to be educated. The paſſion of fear is ſooner, and more effectually, produced, in children whoſe parents are capricious and arbitrary, than in thoſe whoſe parents are reaſonable and mild in their conduct. The infinite variety which we obſerve in what is called the ſpirit of youth, is principally owing to the various approaches of men to reaſon and nature, in the management of their families.

The deſign of the Deity, in giving us this paſſion, as in every other thing, is ſupremely wiſe and good. It prevents us from running into dangers, which would be fatal: and it puts us on

inventing thoſe ſecurities, which our circumſtances require.—But, like all other paſſions, it is often improperly formed; and either has too much or too little weight and influence in the general council of the human mind. A child, who has been educated under a capricious and tyrannical father, has this paſſion in exceſs; he has a habit of being apprehenſive of every thing, and every perſon; becauſe he has never been a moment ſecure of his parent's good opinion and regard, and underſtood not the principles on which he would act. On the other hand, a child who has been totally unreſtrained, and never taught to fear, even on proper occaſions, exhibits the oppoſite character, of brutal inconſiderateneſs and imprudence. And, as moſt men are fond of extremes, we are generally divided into timid and raſh; either we have this paſſion in great exceſs, or we have hardly any of it.

The preciſe boundaries of fear, and the beſt method of adjuſting it to its proper place, and even of forming it in the mind; the uſe and abuſe of it in our moral conduct, we may conſider at another time. Our preſent buſineſs is to trace it in one confined direction; and to conſider that principle of religion, which is called the fear of God.

It is unlikely, that men ſhould avoid carrying into religion, the ideas which they have formed in common life. It is not poſſible for ſome perſons to look up to a ſuperior, without fear of danger and injury; as they have never been accuſtomed to ſee power unaccompanied with tyranny. Men almoſt unavoida-

bly model their character of God, from the characters of thoſe whom they have been taught to attend to, and reſpect. All our knowledge is acquired by gradual ſteps; that which may be deemed metaphyſical, and ſpiritual, is formed by analogy. We ſuppoſe things inviſible, after the manner of the things we ſee. This cannot, in ſuch a caſe, be avoided. Few men can avoid referring even infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, to a being; their imagination will almoſt neceſſarily give to that being a form; and the human imagination can delineate nothing ſuperior to the human figure. The higheſt efforts of genius, in this way, which we have any account of, are the deſcription of Jupiter, by Homer; and a ſtatue, which was a copy of that deſcription, by Phidias. If the ſublimeſt imaginations cannot keep clear of this infirmity, it is not wonderful that men of ordinary minds, and of little leiſure, ſhould be infeſted with it. We find, accordingly, that every religion has its Jupiter, more or leſs excellent, according to the character of its founder; and almoſt the whole world is fallen into the error, of ſuppoſing God to be ſuch as themſelves; or, rather, ſuch as thoſe who have governed and educated them; and, by their conduct, have given them the firſt impreſſions of authority and power. And as the exerciſe of power is generally capricious and tyrannical, the firſt and general notion of mankind, with regard to Divine Power, is apprehenſive, timid, and ſlaviſh. This is ſtrengthened and confirmed, by political inſtitutions, and forms of civil government; which, like domeſtic forms, are almoſt univerſally approaching to deſpotiſm. The wretch, who, from the ſeverities of a capricious parent, comes into a ſociety, where the ſupreme power acts at pleaſure, has

has his apprehenſions doubled; and looking up to his God, not only through a ſtern father, but through a deſpotic king, whom he is taught to conſider as God's delegate, repreſentative, and image, upon earth; it is not wonderful, that the moſt abject and ſlaviſh fear, ſhould be the great principle of his religion. We find, throughout the whole eaſtern world, where power is exerciſed arbitrarily, both in families and governments, that the religion of the people, under its various forms, is nothing but ſuperſtition; which is always the effect of immoderate and unmanly fear. The people may be diſpoſed to timidity, from the climate they inhabit; but they are rendered daſtardly in their conduct, and highly ſuperſtitious in their religion, by the tyranny of their domeſtic and political inſtitutions.—In ſome of the northern parts of Europe, political inſtitutions have, in ſome degree, concurred with nature, in giving men firmer, and more vigorous; minds. It is, however, but in a ſmall degree, that this benefit is enjoyed; and its effects are ſcarcely diſcernible in religion; the doctrines and principles of which, being, for the moſt part, fabricated in the eaſt, and adopted here, more from a regard to their origin, than from a rational conviction of their excellence, brought with them a great portion of that ſpirit, that eaſtern timidity and abjectneſs, which conſtitute the eſſence of religious ſuperſtition.

We can never get clear of this weakneſs, till we have adjuſted our notions of power, by the aſſiſtance of reaſon. In the preſent ſtate of things, this is hardly practicable. The beſt underſtanding will have ſome bias, from the impreſſions which are made,

made, by the wanton and arbitrary exertions of power, in the world around us: and we can hardly ever look up to God, without ſome degree of ſuperſtitious fear; ſome unaccountable, and therefore unreaſonable, apprehenſions of his almighty and unlimited power.

There is no ſtate of mind more delightful, than that in which it may be ſaid to feel itſelf growing up into a virtuous and manly character. This is, at once, a reaſon for induſtry, in enenquiring after truth, and a reward for what we ſuffer, from the wrong principles and habits, which are produced by our education, and the influence of our political inſtitutions. The pleaſure of being relieved from ſome bodily complaints, is often a recompence for having endured them; and the pleaſure of being relieved from prepoſſeſſions and prejudices, is of a purer and better kind:—but it muſt bé effected by an act of the mind. Indeed, we have abundant occaſion for this exertion; and an extenſive field, in which we may reap this pleaſure. Every thing we are taught, in education, has too much the nature of a prepoſſeſſion; and there is a period in every man's life, in which he undertakes the conduct of his mind; reviews the ſtock, which has been laid in for him; arranges ſome materials, and throws by others; nay, traces back all the ſteps, by which he has been led to knowledge, and educates himſelf anew. This is the period, at which he commences a rational being; and the excellence and happineſs of his mind, depend on the care and judgment with which this ſecond education is conducted. Every man muſt take this trouble for himſelf, on all principles which are of importance

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to him. On the preſent ſubject, I can only ſhew the neceſſity of it. In this country, the cauſes and degrees of religious fear, are as various as the characters of individuals; and every one, who wiſhes to improve his ſuperſtition into a rational principle of piety, muſt do it for himſelf.—I will endeavour to delineate that rational principle, as naturally ariſing from the contemplation of the almighty power of God.

If we ſuppoſe any being, who can conſider the univerſe as it is, the effect of goodneſs, wiſdom and power; we ſhall judge, that the ſentiments ariſing in his mind, muſt be love, admiration, and that paſſion, which, perhaps, has had no name in any language on earth; and which is excited by power, benevolently and properly directed. It is free from apprehenſion of injury; and therefore free from the weakneſs of fear. It has an awe and reverence in it, which partakes of the nature of this paſſion; and what is moſt ſimilar to it, is the concern we are under, when we know the principles and deſigns of an affectionate parent, or a beloved friend—left, by inadvertency, or by the impulſe of paſſion, we ſhould ſo far forget ourſelves, as to do any thing diſagreeable to him. It is by calmly and rationally conſidering the works of God, in ourſelves, and in the world around us, we conclude, that every thing is under the direction of infinite goodneſs, wiſdom, and power. The perfect character we aſcribe to God, is the model on which we form the nobleſt and beſt part of our own; and with the moſt rational ſentiments of his being; the moſt perfect conviction, that his power is the inſtrument of his goodneſs, and can execute no

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purpoſe, that has cruelty, or even ſeverity, in it—yet we ſhall feel an apprehenſion, which is ſomething like fear, when we look up to him—not only, leſt we ſhould fail in copying the excellencies of the Divine Nature: but leſt we ſhould be led to forget the very principles of virtue, and to act an unreaſonable and unbecoming part. This is the fear of God; and this is a rational and uſeful principle of religion.

I need not be at any great pains, to thoſe who are well-diſpoſed, in ſhewing the effects of this principle, on the general conduct of a man's life. Every perſon, who has looked up to the Supreme Being with this view; every one, who has even regarded the friendſhip and good opinion of an intelligent and virtuous man, will comprehend the nature of this fear; and will acknowledge, that it is ſo far from depreſſing and weakening the mind, like the common paſſion which goes under that name, that nothing can have a greater tendency to invigorate and ſtrengthen it—nothing can excite a nobler ambition to be, in our meaſure, perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect:—the very concern for our failings, and the apprehenſion leſt we ſhould do amiſs, are ſo meliorated by juſt and amiable views of God, that they give us rather pleaſure than pain; and we feel them, not as the reſtraints of power, to torment us; but as the kind proviſions of goodneſs, to render us happy.

The difference between this pleaſing and genuine principle, and that fear which produces ſuperſtition; is the difference between the motives which actuate a man, and thoſe which actu-

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ate a ſlave. The one acts from himſelf, does his duty becauſe he loves it—the other is diſtracted with apprehenſions; acts becauſe he is enjoined; looks up to Supreme Power with terror; and interpoſes as many interceſſors as poſſible, as barriers between him and the object he dreads. It is the buſineſs of ſuperſtition, to keep God as much as poſſible out of view. We find, accordingly, in thoſe religions where it prevails, that every artifice is made uſe of, to prevent the timid and broken ſpirit of the devotee, from being ſhocked with the moſt tranſient thought of God. Artful legiſlators and prieſts, have intimidated the people to ſuch a degree, that they have been glad to interpoſe, between them and the Deity, not only angels, men, and animals; but even bits of old ſhoes, and the parings of a wretch's nails. There is no view of human nature, more humiliating than this; there is no ſtate of abjectneſs and miſery, out of which it is more difficult to extricate the unhappy creatures, who are involved in it. Vice is not ſo hopeleſs as ſuperſtition. It engenders all the moſt loathſome villainies and miſeries; and ſanctifies and inſures their exiſtence, by holy appellations. It is ſunk below the reach of knowledge; and eradicates every principle, both of virtue and happineſs, in the human mind.——We are happy, that we ſee, only at a diſtance, the talons of this infernal fiend. We cannot rouſe our ſpirit in a nobler cauſe, than in that of entire liberty from its tyranny and government. Superſtition blaſts every thing around us; lays heaven and earth into one gloomy and horrid darkneſs; makes our religion a curſe; our governments deſpotic and oppreſſive; and renders us incapable of private virtue and happineſs.

Let us hold faſt the principles of true religious liberty, as we would our lives; for, by relinquiſhing them, we loſe, in effect, every thing which can make our lives worth enjoying—Let us look up to God, with the humility and reverence of men, and not with the diſtraction and horror of ſlaves; and conſider ourſelves, as ſent into the world by him, to enjoy our beings, and the bleſſings he has given; and not to contrive expedients to guard againſt his malignity——It is then, and then only—that the fear of God, can be the beginning of wiſdom.

LECTURE

LECTURE IX.

UNIVERSAL RELIGION.

Be ye Followers of God.

THERE is hardly any thing ſo unfavourable to morality, as the controul of its great and eſſential principles, by ſecondary and inferior conſiderations. When a man of real genius has conceived the great outlines of an important and uſeful work, he is not much concerned about ſmaller circumſtances—an inferior mind is otherwiſe occupied; and much more anxious about his title-page, than the materials of his compoſition. So it is in religion. Great minds regard principles; little minds are employed on names or denominations. This has perverted religion into a diſpute on words, or into a contention of parties, for the honour and intereſt of their leaders. That men ſhould be diſpoſed to aſſociate in bands; that they have a veneration for the names and opinions of any ſingular and extraordinary perſons, cannot be thought unaccountable; but that theſe diſpoſitions, ſhould lead them to reſign the pleaſing and uſeful exerciſe of their underſtandings; humble them into blind and implicit followers; and make them give up the manly conſciouſneſs of independance and freedom—are things not eaſily accounted for.

Nothing can be of any poſſible uſe in this world, but as it has a tendency to make men happy; and the firſt principle of moral happineſs, is benevolence, or good-will to all men. Without this, juſtice degenerates into chicane; all the virtues become mechanical obſervances; and all ſerene, genuine, and permanent happineſs, muſt be ſought in vain. Whenever the tenets and principles of a religion, are inconſiſtent with benevolence; or have a tendency to contract and change it into the ſpirit or zeal of parties; we may depend on its being unworthy of a man; and that its effects, either ſooner or later, will appear to be injurious to the real intereſts and happineſs of the world.

In the hiſtory of religion, which is the hiſtory of ſects and parties, we find this to have been the caſe. We have beheld zeal for names and opinions, brandiſhing its weapons, at the expence of that univerſal affection, which is the foundation of all goodneſs; and drawing legions and nations to its ſtandard;—while all the virtues, which are uſeful and important to human nature, were trampled with negligence and ſcorn. The world became a gloomy and horrid deſart; where opinions ſprung up, like rank and poiſonous weeds, and choaked every plant and flower, given for the ſuſtenance or comfort of mankind.

Men are emerging from religious darkneſs, and the abſurdities and cruelties which it covered, with the ſame ridiculous timidity, and the ſame unmanly caution, with which we ſee ſome perſons ſtruggling, between deſire and ſhame, to quit vicious companions, and to become regular in their conduct. When,

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in manners, it was manly to appear daily intoxicated, how ridiculous was the ſituation of a perſon, who did not wiſh to be always in a ſtate of intoxication; but was aſhamed to appear ſingular, as a ſober man! Juſt ſo it has been in religion. It would have been an unpardonable ſingularity and preſumption, in ſome periods of public manners, to have dared to be decent and ſober: it would have been, and, I am afraid, it would ſtill be, a dangerous hereſy, and an unpardonable crime, in religion, to be governed and conducted by good-ſenſe, without a mixture of abſurdity and folly; or, in other words, to be followers of God.

Until a ſtate of knowledge and virtue takes place, which will admit of this univerſal religion—this religion, not only of the whole earth, but of all creatures, in all worlds, throughout that undefinable ſpace, which we call the univerſe:——until this be the caſe, men muſt continue bigots and ſectaries. For all inferior denominations, to that which is given by the Deity; and all principles and opinions, which are not derived immediately from his works, injure the underſtanding and the heart, and are unfriendly to the virtue and happineſs of men. There is a ſelfiſhneſs in bigotry, and the ſpirit of party, which has the ſame effect with ſelfiſhneſs in an individual; and is the proper and ſure foundation of all poſſible vices. For as the individual becomes vicious, by centering all his views in himſelf, and deſtroying his ſocial affections; ſo a ſect or party becomes execrable, by ſeparating its opinions, intereſts, and affections, from thoſe of the whole world.——This gives us the true definition of a ſectary;

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and obliges us to apply it, not only to the numerous ſubdiviſions of ſuperſtitious clans, but to general denominations; which will ever have the effect of contracting and vitiating the heart; and we muſt be involved in contentions, and ſubject to imputations, as ſectaries, until we riſe above all of them; adopt the principles of univerſal benevolence; and are followers only of God.

It may be neceſſary to obſerve, that when we uſe the phraſe, followers of God, we mean not to countenance any of the common errors, or the common extravagant conceptions, concerning him. Perhaps, in this view, there is no ſcience ſo indecent, ſo impudent, ſo offenſive, as metaphyſical divinity. When a man has obtained general proofs, that the univerſe is replete with the effects of wiſdom, directed to the happineſs of its inhabitants, he has all the knowledge he can ever have of God. All his further enquiries, when judiciouſly made, will only furniſh additional evidence to the ſame general truth. But whether he be nature itſelf, or a principle diſtinct from, and animating it; whether he conſiſt of matter or ſpirit; whether he be infinite ſpace, or a mathematical point; whether he be undefinable, and have no form, or have a determined figure, and reſide in a particular place?—Theſe are ridiculous and miſchievous queſtions; becauſe we have no poſſibility of being informed on the ſubjects of them; becauſe they miſlead us from truth, the principle of virtue, to viſions and errors, the principles of vice; they create differences, generate diviſions, and deſtroy the general harmony

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and benevolence, which were deſigned to reign through the whole univerſe.

Thoſe only, who are content with what can be known of God, may be followers of him, and citizens of the world. Thoſe who quit obſervation, experience, and reaſon; and ſink into the ſhadowy regions of viſion and ſuppoſition, neceſſarily become ſectaries; are diſunited by numberleſs diviſions; and, inſtead of appearing as brethren, and dwelling together in unity, they are cruel and implacable enemies.

Nay, we may go further, and ſay, that the nature of the virtue and happineſs of man, as a moral and ſocial being, is ſuch, that they cannot reſt ſecurely and permanently, on any but the general and certain truths of morality. All opinions, which are generated by the imagination, or which we take from others, are liable to be diſputed; and diſputes, by deſtroying benevolence, deſtroy the very foundation of moral happineſs. As, in architecture, it is neceſſary that the foundation ſhould be of ſufficient extent to ſupport the whole building, and every way anſwerable to the dimenſions of the ſuperſtructure to be raiſed; ſo in morals, the univerſal ſcience, occupation, and buſineſs, of all God's creatures, the truths which are its principles and foundations, ſhould lead to all its obligations, and admit of all its poſſible duties. Theſe cannot be opinions; becauſe opinions depend on the ſtructures of particular men: they vary as thoſe vary; and are liable to be altered or loſt. They muſt be certain truths; permanent as the univerſe; and intelligible to all. Theſe can only

only be learnt, by contemplating nature, and inveſtigating the attributes of God, in his works.

All the morality in the whole world, ever has been, and ever will be, learnt and ſupported in this method, by attending to the diſpoſitions and tendencies of nature, and following, as it were, the footſteps of the Deity. When human inſtitutions and human errors, had led men out of the way, and made them vicious and miſerable, a variety of remedies were propoſed to them; and the pretended ſanctions of God were given to all theſe remedies. I am far from wiſhing, even if I had it in my power, to diſcredit all the ſchemes, which have been projected to reſtore men to virtue and happineſs. The moſt ſerious and important objection to them is, the pretence of an immediate commiſſion from the Deity. For though this ſecured the views of the projectors, and perhaps enabled them to do all the good they intended; it confirmed and eſtabliſhed their errors, and enabled them alſo to do all the miſchief they intended. So credulous and ſimple have the people been in this matter, though they believed God to be almighty; that he alone could rectify the occaſions of miſery in the creation; and that, from his known goodneſs, he would, if that were either beneficial or neceſſary—they have credited almoſt every pretended commiſſion of men to this purpoſe; and they have continued, for ages, in their attachment to theſe meſſengers, though all their plans, and all their projects, have proved egregiouſly ineffectual. When God changes the order of nature, or rectifies its errors (both which we muſt conceive to be impoſſible) it will be as he hath

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eſtabliſhed it in an effectual manner; but in a manner incomprehenſible to man. Nature ever has been as it ſhould be; the errors and vices which are to be removed, are in the inſtitutions of men; and they muſt be removed; not by demi-gods and angels and meſſengers from heaven; but by the reaſon and virtue of men. While they look out of themſelves for their happineſs, either as individuals or communities, pretended Gods will never be wanting to come to their aſſiſtance, to impoſe on them, and to make them wretched. But if they attend diligently to the intimations and inſtructions of nature, and follow God alone, their only infallible and ſafe guide, they will be ſecure from errors, or may remedy them, and become truly virtuous and happy. This we may ſee to have been the univerſal religion of the world. For it is the religion of nature alone, in proportion as it has been blended with the ſuperſtitions of mankind, which has preſerved them either from contempt or execration.

The various idolatries of the Heathen World, were either the worſhip of allegorical perſons, with alluſions to benefits received from Jupiter in the etherial fire, Juno in the air, Neptune in the ſea, &c.—or an extravagant reſpect to philoſophers, legiſlators, heroes, and impoſtors. Among the flights of poetry, and the arts of knavery, every religion held out many of the eſſential principles of natural morality. The Jewiſh, the Chriſtian, and the Mahomedan religions, have their reſpective peculiarities, in the birth, fortune, and views of their founders; and in circumſtances of belief, ceremonies, and rites. But when their intereſts interfere; when their adherents are driven to compare

the ſeveral excellencies of their religions; when they wiſh to make converts from each other—they do not inſiſt on thoſe peculiar circumſtances; they do not compare the births of Moſes, Chriſt, and Mahomed, or the different ſpiritual effects of circumciſion, baptiſm, and a pilgrimage to Mecca—but they all turn Deiſts; and labour, with all poſſible induſtry, to ſhew, each for his religion, that it contains more than the others, of the principles and truths of the religion of nature. Thus the controverſy is now managed. Here, on deiſm; on univerſal morality; on the principles and doctrines which have ever been, and ever will be, derived from nature—all the claims of all the religions in the world, to credit and divinity, are countenanced and ſupported.

Men, therefore, ſhould be ſo far from being aſhamed or afraid to be called after the name of the Deity, that they ſhould glory in it as their higheſt honour. Nay, no religious appellation ſhould be applied to men, who would act on the principles of univerſal benevolence, which refers to any being but Almighty God. I ſpeak, therefore, for myſelf, and from my ſoul—that, when I have been reproached, by ignorance, with the name of Deiſt, I felt no other regret, than that I was not worthy of that nobleſt of all appellations. I could look up to Jupiter and Apollo and Mars and Venus;—to Moſes, Chriſt, and Mahomed; and not, even from my errors and faults, be afraid to wear their names: but to be called after a name, appropriated to that perfectly wiſe and perfectly good Being, who animates and bleſſes the univerſe—ſeems to call for a character of underſtanding and virtue,

virtue, which is alarming; and though I ſhould rejoice in deſerving, I ſhould be very cautious in aſſuming it.

I make this declaration, not from the uſual ſpirit of party, or from a deſire to ſeparate thoſe who may attend here, from any denomination of the Jewiſh or Chriſtian World. Names and diſtinctions in religion, ſhould be conſidered as names and diſtinctions among nations; and the ſubdiviſions of the former, into ſects, are like thoſe of the latter, into provinces and counties. In proportion to the excellence of a man's underſtanding, and the enlargement of his mind, he will extend his affections beyond his neighbourhood to his country, and beyond his country to the world. It is juſt ſo in religion. In proportion as a man improves in real knowledge and virtue, he will open his heart, not only to different ſects of the ſame religion with himſelf, but to men of all the religions in the world. For, as in the one caſe, an attachment to the province I inhabit, merely as ſuch, and not as a part of the kingdom; or a love of our country, merely as ſuch, and not as a part of the world—is a ridiculous and injurious paſſion: ſo, an attachment to a ſect of religion, merely as ſuch, and not as a part of the whole; or even to the religion itſelf, merely as ſuch, and not as a part of the univerſal religion, and the univerſal means of moral virtue and happineſs; is an illiberal and hurtful paſſion. Since philoſophy and commerce have aſſociated provinces and nations, provincial and national prejudices have given way to a general and noble humanity; and we are apt to ſmile at a mere Frenchman; a mere Engliſhman; or a mere Spaniard. Religious prejudices, it is to be hoped, will follow; and while a man may be a ſincere

cere Jew, a ſincere Chriſtian, or a ſincere Mahomedan; or may even be attached to any particular ſects of thoſe religions; he will alſo be a man;—a creature of God, in common with men of all religions;—and the power of his particular attachment will be, to that of his benevolence, like the power of any partial and inferior movement, to the power of that great wheel, which governs the whole machine.

While, therefore, I endeavour to raiſe your minds to the nobleſt and moſt uſeful of all affections, univerſal benevolence; I mean not to break in on any particular attachments, which may be conſiſtent with it. While I wiſh you to be followers of God, I aim not to detach you from thoſe whom you may imagine to be his meſſengers and ſervants. For, as I ſhould honour a man, while he cultivated a proper affection for all mankind, who would have a particular regard to his country; ſo I ſhould a Jew, a Chriſtian, or a Mahomedan, while truly a follower of God; truly and univerſally benevolent; who ſhould have a particular regard for the Law of Moſes, the Goſpel, or the Koran.

LECTURE

LECTURE X.

UNIVERSAL TOLERATION. PART I.

If this Counſel, or this Work, be of Men, it will come to nought:
But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.

THERE is a degree of good ſenſe and liberality in the ſentiments I have read to you; which would be remarkable, and perhaps aſtoniſhing, if Chriſtians were to be believed, in all they have ſaid of Jewiſh bigotry and inhumanity. They are the plain dictates of common ſenſe; and conſtitute an eternal and invariable rule, in all matters of enquiry and opinion.

But when we ſpeak of common ſenſe, and the principles of nature, we ſpeak of things, which the people have no ideas of, on ſubjects where they have been taught to diſregard them. It is difficult, therefore, to appeal to the principles of nature, in caſes where nature is never attended to; and to perſons, who think they have found better information, either in the regulations and laws of ſociety, or in the dogmas and principles of their ſeveral religions. So many circumſtances have blended with the reaſons that ſhould determine men to form themſelves into a ſtate, that our enquiry into thoſe reaſons themſelves, is at-

tended with perplexity; and when we ſuppoſe a caſe regulated by nature, we proceed under ſuch diſadvantages, that we are diſcouraged ourſelves, and frighten others from all thoughts of following us. In this ſituation, which is truly diſtreſſing to ingenious and inquiſitive minds, we are often aſſiſted, by means which were intended for other ends. The ill policy, which, for many ages, has been driving adventurers and induſtrious men, in all directions, over the face of the earth, has been the means of a variety of knowledge, which we ſhould not otherwiſe have obtained. Among other things, which philoſophic faſhion makes of the firſt importance, we have ſlight and occaſional hints, of the principles and morals of men, in nearly the firſt ſteps towards forming ſocieties. The ſentiments of nature have been learnt, on this ſubject, from ſeveral of our tranſactions with theſe people. Policy, and religious zeal, have often ſuggeſted projects of introducing among them our principles and opinions. And, in every caſe, where we have preſerved only the appearance of good-will, and an honeſty and diſintereſtedneſs, they have given us a fair and candid hearing; and ſeemed inclined to be informed and directed. This is the genuine diſpoſition of nature. We have failed of ſucceſs with them; ſometimes for want of clearneſs and ſimplicity; and ſometimes for want of truth, in the principles we laid down. And we have incurred their diſpleaſure, and hatred; becauſe they plainly ſaw, that our whole aim was advantage from them; and that, while inducing them to look to the other world, and terrifying them with ſpectres there, we were depriving them of their property and advantages here. They never diſcovered any thing like intolerance of opi-

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nions. Indeed, nature abhors it; and men continue ſtrangers to it, in any manner, and under any form, until their underſtandings are corrupted by vicious ſocieties, and principles and opinions are the means of power and riches.

The natural ſimplicity and candour of the people have been, not only, the ground on which good and wiſe men have proceeded, to inſtruct and benefit them; but that alſo which bad men have taken, to erect their ſeveral inſtitutions upon. The principles and opinions, by which politicians have formed moſt of our civil and religious conſtitutions, were firſt propoſed properly to the people, and admitted by an original law and diſpoſition of human nature; which is, to hear candidly, and admit every thing which has the appearance of truth. When a propoſition is once admitted into the mind, it becomes a principle, or a prepoſſeſſion, according to the nature of the mind itſelf. But it never diſpoſes a man to intolerance, until he be corrupted, by a regard to the advantages or diſadvantages attending it.—Some weak and ignorant perſons, have been diſintereſted in their bigotry; but they have been the tools of deſigning men. I have had much occaſion to attend to the effects of intolerance; and I have never known a perſon, who was only weak or ignorant, guilty of an act of cruelty or malice, for opinions, but when under the influence of ſome artful man. Nature, under every imaginable diſadvantage from weakneſs, would never lead to ſuch vices as bigotry and intolerance.

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We are to trace bigotry and malignant zeal, into the common ſources of all kinds of injuſtice; the love of power, and the love of riches; which have univerſally corrupted men, in imperfect ſocieties, by firſt engaging their inclinations, and then perverting their minds

It would ſeem ſtrange, in mere ſpeculation, that the ſame propoſition, which was offered to the public with decency and humility, ſhould, when admitted, be inſiſted upon as truth, to be forced into men's minds. In the ſame manner, it might ſeem ſtrange, that, in the firſt ſimple and unimproved ſtate of ſociety, principles and opinions are treated with the candour and fairneſs of the moſt improved philoſophy; and that, as men advance in ſociety, they loſe theſe virtues, and become guilty of enormities, which would diſhonour the moſt infernal communities, that have been yet deſcribed. I ſpeak within the limits of truth; for the moſt malignant imaginations, that have hitherto deſcribed hell, even when they have been animated by perſonal hatred, and frantic bigotry, towards thoſe whom they wiſhed to be tormented there; have barely deſcribed the actual cruelties and miſeries of the inquiſition. If ſocieties ſhould be formed, in ſome future periods, on principles of reaſon, juſtice, and humanity, the hiſtory of the inquiſition will be conſidered as a fiction. It will not be believed, that men could have been ſuch devils; and future generations, will be ſaved the ſhame, regret, and torture, with which every enlightened and good man muſt read this hiſtory. What a difference between a ſavage Indian, as we may call him, opening his mind, and liſtening, with the genuine candour of nature;

nature; and a Spaniſh inquiſitor, with the countenance and ſoul of an infernal ſpirit, conſigning a good and innocent perſon, becauſe he is miſtaken, to a ſeries of tortures, which no crimes could ever have deſerved. This man, too, a ſupercilious Chriſtian; vain of his faith, as inſpired by God; and daily hearing the "Chriſtian laws—thoſe laws, which, ſoftening nature by "humanity, melt nations into brotherhood."

I could trace this matter, from its origin, to its higheſt enormity, if I might, without offence. I could not do it, and eſcape the unjuſt charge, of intending to injure the Chriſtian Religion. I ſincerely think, the Chriſtian Religion gives as little countenance to intolerance and perſecution, as the religion of nature. But, if I told the truth of its prieſts—while they have a character with the people, independent of their merit, truth would be a libel; and a libel againſt the ſacred meſſengers of Heaven, would be a ſin, for which there could be no atonement. I will touch this matter as lightly as I can.——In the firſt ſettlement of a community, when opinions, like lands, are in common, and not improved to the advantage of particular proprietors, no diſputes or quarrels ariſe concerning them. But when principles have formed parties; and bring, to the leaders of thoſe parties, both honour and profit; they become, like an incloſed field, a matter of property and attention. Hence the firſt jealouſy, on the advancement of new opinions; and hence the loſs of men's original ideas, in regard to them. They were firſt the ſpontaneous effects of the human mind, and the common means of general improvement. They are changed into a pro-

perty, which men are to guard. Having no other idea of them, it is not ſtrange, that any new opinion ſhould be regarded with jealouſy, and even with hatred, if it endanger the old principles, ſo profitable to their proprietors.

Men have been obſerved, to have this jealouſy and hatred, in proportion to the abſurdity of the principles they wiſhed to ſecure. This opens another view of the ſubject. Intellectual proprietors, finding their profitable and honourable opinions were endangered, by the enquiries of ingenious, and the integrity of honeſt, men; have branded genius and honeſty with infamy. This is a curious fact, in the hiſtory of mankind; but exemplified in that of all ages and nations. Moral and political enquiries, have ever alarmed thoſe, whoſe intereſt it was, to continue ſuperſtitious and political inſtitutions. This is the reaſon, that truth, which is ever pleaſing and welcome to nature, is become, in moſt ſocieties, an object of jealouſy and deteſtation; and that the hiſtory of the world, is tarniſhed with ſo many injuries, to its warmeſt and beſt votaries. The whole life of Socrates, was one continued ſtruggle of truth and virtue, againſt error and vice. Jeſus Chriſt fell in the ſame cauſe. And every man, who will oppoſe truth and virtue to thoſe inſtitutions, or thoſe principles, which bring profit and honours to the ſelfiſh and ambitious, muſt expect ſimilar difficulties, and look for ſimilar injuries. Truth and virtue will ever be diſhonourable, in proportion to the number of thoſe civil or eccleſiaſtical inſtitutions, where opinions only confer honour and advantage. In the beſt republics of antiquity, thoſe caſes were not numerous; but they were

ſufficient to occaſion the death of Socrates; to tarniſh their other glories, and conſign their inſtitutions to eternal infamy.—The Roman government, roſe and fell on military principles. The ſupreme triumph of ignorance, and the perfect ſuppreſſion of truth, was reſerved for the Gothic Ages. Every metaphyſical fancy, was formed into a dogma; the whole world ſeemed to be converted into prieſts, and to be plunged into irretrievable wretchedneſs. All ideas of the rights of private judgment, were wholly loſt; and principles and doctrines were allotted to the people, at the will and pleaſure of the civil power. No man had any idea of enquiry, but into the doctrines which he was enjoined to believe. This moral and ſpiritual tyranny, the moſt compleat and cruel which can be deviſed, reduced the people to a ſtate of wretchedneſs, below any thing we know of, in the hiſtory of human nature. There is no condition of ſavages, ſo deplorable: for, to be deſtitute of conveniencies and luxuries, is a ſmall diſadvantage, to that of having the powers of the mind chained down, and rendered uſeleſs. This ſtate of men, introduced a kind of language, to which nature is a ſtranger. The people were to believe, not becauſe they ſaw and underſtood; but becauſe they were commanded. All the languages of Europe, are infeſted with this jargon; and there is nothing more familiar to us, than phraſes, which cannot be explained by any principles of common ſenſe. We are commended or blamed, for believing, or not believing; juſt as we are for walking, or not walking; and we are deſired to be of this or that faith, as if it were in our power to chuſe truth or falſehood, virtue or vice, at our own pleaſure.

The activity of the human mind, however, could not long be ſuppreſſed. Activity is as natural and neceſſary to it, as it is to the body; and if its powers be reſtrained in one mode of action, they muſt exert themſelves in another. Morality and religion were forbidden ſubjects; men were therefore obliged to turn to trade, commerce, the arts, and philoſophy. There was ſome latitude given on theſe ſubjects. Riches gave leiſure, and leiſure produced knowledge, and knowledge is every where deſtroying ſuperſtition. The progreſs of this knowledge, has been marked by ſome æras; but thoſe æras were effects of the circumſtances we have mentioned. The Reformation from Popery, was not the cauſe of liberty; perhaps it was not ſo friendly to it, as has been imagined. The Reformation would not have taken place, if men had not been previouſly diſpoſed to uſe their natural liberty, on a variety of caſes, which had eſcaped the notice of their tyrannical maſters. Knowledge has been ever ſince in a ſtate of ſlow progreſſion; and many of the clouds of bigotry and ſuperſtition, have gradually diſappeared. Men, in the habit of judging and reaſoning, on ſubjects of trade, of taſte, or of ſcience, will either diſcard religion totally, or think for themſelves, on the principles of it. Theſe free-thinkers, as they have been reproachfully called, have been great benefactors of mankind.—They have aſſiſted, on many occaſions, in freeing them from the worſt of all ſlavery, that of the mind, to principles and opinions. We may have ſeen this, in one of the moſt celebrated, and the moſt obnoxious of free-thinkers, in a neighbouring nation; whoſe loſs the friends of humanity are now regretting. He thought himſelf not ſafe in the kingdom, and in the hands

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of a civil and eccleſiaſtical power, which had great remains of Gothic ignorance and barbarity. He placed himſelf on its borders; and, by his eloquence and wit, kept the whole civil and eccleſiaſtical power of France in awe. If they occaſionally ventured on acts of perſecution and cruelty, he applied to them the laſh of juſt ſatire; and held them up to all Europe, bleeding with thoſe wounds, which never cloſe, and which the hand of genius alone can give. It is by ſuch men, that knowledge and happineſs are diffuſed. Every man, who encourages and aſſiſts his fellow-creatures to acquire truths, by exerciſing their own faculties, deſerves well of the world. Every man, who hinders the free exerciſe of human powers, is an enemy to the beſt intereſts of mankind.

It may, poſſibly, be objected, that, by thus pleading the cauſe of liberty, I aim at the ſubverſion of all order, and all peace; that the people are not capable of uſing this liberty; and that it would be, in their hands, an inſtrument, more likely to be employed to their injury, than to their benefit.—If I could find any reaſon to think, that prieſts and magiſtrates and kings, were made of different materials, and endowed with different ſouls, from theſe common people, I would allow of this objection. The latter might be converted into beaſts of burden; and the former might load and ride them.

Is the order and abjectneſs and peace, ariſing from ignorance and ſlavery, to be compared to that animated vigour, and that heart-

heart-felt happineſs, which is to be had only from knowledge and virtue?

It may be ſaid, that I am pleading a cauſe, which does not want my aſſiſtance; that, in England, every man is at liberty to think for himſelf; and all opinions are tolerated. As far as this is true, it is an honour to the country. It is the principal glory of our government; and what the moſt enlightened of our neighbours, are moſt apt to envy us for. There are yet, however, many bitter remains of the ancient leaven. We pretend to have a variety of opinions, perhaps, without having any. I ſincerely think, that, in ten thouſand zealous Chriſtians, it would be difficult to find one, who believes a God! I mean, who has any reaſon for ſuch belief. They have heard of Chriſt; and they are determined to be his diſciples: but why?—They know not. They are divided into ſects and parties; and every man is at liberty to be of one or other of thoſe parties.—But if he ſees reaſons to diſregard all, he is ſubject to the diſpleaſure and malice of all. Men may be divided into ſects, and have no liberty; and they may be united into one ſociety, and one religion, and enjoy the benefits of univerſal toleration. The principles of government, the laws of ſociety, and all thoſe obligations, by which we are united to each other, and made happy, are no reſtraints on that unlimited freedom, with which we ſhould conduct our enquiries. There is no real virtue, without knowledge; and knowledge cannot be obtained, without the liberty of enquiry.

LECTURE XI.

UNIVERSAL TOLERATION. PART II.

If this Counſel, or this Work, be of Men, it will come to nought:
But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.

THOSE who attended here on Sunday laſt, may remember, I endeavoured to ſhew, that the doctrine of univerſal toleration, and unlimited freedom of opinion, is a principle of nature; that it appears to be ſo, in all thoſe inſtitutions, where nature and reaſon have any conſiderable influence; that bigotry and intolerance, are the produce of ignorance and barbariſm; and are vices ſo odious to humanity, that they muſt have been expelled the world, but for the profits attending the practice of them.

If I had been addreſſing an audience, conſiſting wholly of philoſophers, I ſhould not have thought it neceſſary, to lead them into ſimple and ſavage communities; or into any of the ancient republics, to hear the language of nature, on that equal juſtice, which is due from every man to every man; and on that unreſtrained freedom, with which the faculties of the mind ought ever to be exerciſed. I would have appealed to their own underſtandings, which would have conceived inſtantaneouſly, and admitted

admitted, with the moſt chearful approbation, the following clear and ſimple propoſition:—That private and public happineſs, is produced only by virtue; virtue only by knowledge; and knowledge only by free enquiry.

The mind is as naturally diſpoſed, for the acquiſition of knowledge, as the members of the body are, for the offices to which they are ſuited; and the cruelty and wickedneſs, of rendering the former inactive and uſeleſs, muſt be greater, and more heinous, than to maim and mutilate the latter. Every man's heart would revolt, at any miſtaken policy, which might require, that conſiderable numbers of men ſhould have their limbs tied down, rendered uſeleſs, or torn off. The proviſions which God has made, to acquire knowledge, are among the moſt curious and wonderful objects in nature. The manner in which we receive the impreſſions of outward objects; recollect, combine, and form them into thoughts; is a proceſs, for which there are numerous proviſions in all men. What offence, what crime, can we conceive of, more unnatural and heinous, than that of making theſe uſeleſs?—If it be an injuſtice, and an injury, to deprive me of any property, which may be of convenience to me; but which convenience may be ſupplied by reſtitution, or by ſimilar property, which may be obtained: what muſt it be, to deprive me of the uſe of my underſtanding; and to render the firſt and greateſt bleſſing of Heaven, of no effect?——This is done, without ſhame, and without ſufficient reproach, by all thoſe barbarous and Gothic inſtitutions, thoſe cuſtoms, thoſe laws, and thoſe individuals, who throw any reſtraint or diſcou-

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ragement on the activity and freedom of the mind. The wonderful apparatus, which we ſee in the human conſtitution, for receiving the elements of knowledge; forming them into principles; applying them to uſe; and communicating them to others; is every where deranged, by this ignorant barbarity;—and men can hardly commit a greater impiety, or a greater crime.

I may be ſpeaking to many here, in a language which they do not underſtand; though there are thouſands and millions around them, ſuffering, every day, and every hour, in the moſt melancholy manner, from this general injury. Almoſt every vice in human nature, is to be attributed to it. If men were educated, to uſe the powers of their minds freely; to inveſtigate, by their own induſtry, all the principles they want; to conſider nothing as an intellectual acquiſition, but in conſequence of ſuch inveſtigation: this knowledge, would be a ſure foundation of virtue; and human life would have few crimes or miſeries to infeſt it. Inſtead of this, they are educated to take almoſt every thing from others; and to ſuffer their own powers to lie inactive. Moſt of the vices of the world, have ariſen from the habit men have ſo long been in, of believing, inſtead of enquiring. A mind, that is trained to enquiry, is trained in a kind of activity, which will lead to virtue. A mind, in which this activity is ſuppreſſed, has a greater difficulty in becoming virtuous, and is a much eaſier prey to vice. It ſeems to acquire knowledge, and has none; and falſe knowledge is worſe than none. All the wiſdom we obtain, by believing as we are commanded, and committing to memory principles, doc-

trines, and opinions, which we have never conſidered, or do not underſtand, is ſo much poiſon in the mind; which acts the more ſurely, and fatally, as we have no apprehenſion of danger from it We ſee men, overwhelmed with what they call doctrines and principles, both of religion and morality, without being of any uſe to the world; and without ever performing a religious or moral action. It was not ſo, when men were educated to enquire; to think; to form to themſelves a few principles, which they comprehended and felt; and to act on them. This was the caſe, in the beſt ages of Greece. Education had a few ſimple and important objects; and they always related to private and public virtue. It underwent ſome modifications, according to the circumſtances of the different pupils. It would aſtoniſh a modern tutor, to know the time and pains which were taken on theſe few things; and to ſee what wonderful men were formed in this manner. Education, was then the art of developing the mind to principles and employments, which were ſuited to it; and giving it habits, which would lead to any degree of real knowledge. Education, at preſent, is a different thing; it is the art of loading the memory, with the imperfect and uſeleſs knowledge of all languages, and all ſciences; and our youth are often ſent into the world, without one principle of real wiſdom, and almoſt incapable of any act of public and private virtue.

Many of our civil and religious inſtitutions, have the ſame effect on our minds and morals. All principles and opinions, which we admit without enquiry, are miſchievous. They are

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like imaginary wealth in a country; wealth, which is not the fair effect of the induſtry of the people; and which haſtens its deſtruction, while it ſeems to give it proſperity. An imaginary religion, or imaginary knowledge, has the ſame effect. It prevents enquiry; makes the mind vain of what it poſſeſſes not; renders it incapable of real religion, or real knowledge; and ſerves vice the more effectually, under the diſguiſe of virtue.—I never conceived a clearer propoſition, than the truth now inſiſted upon; and it muſt appear ſo, to the moſt intelligent of my hearers. But, as there may be others, who may underſtand me better, if I change the manner of treating this ſubject, I will contraſt the reaſons now advanced, with thoſe which have been offered for reſtraining the liberty of the human mind.—The ſame temptations, which induce men to act unjuſtly, will alſo lead them to reaſon abſurdly; and an advantageous error, or even an advantageous crime, may have a multitude of advocates.

It is ſaid, that when the truth is once obtained, by the induſtry of great and good men, it ought to be eſtabliſhed as a principle, and not to be diſcredited by the ridiculous errors of a multitude of enquirers; and that the intereſts of knowledge and virtue, are better conſulted, by training the people to an implicit aſſent, in caſes, where they could not have leiſure, if they had abilities, to acquire ſufficient knowledge. This might be anſwered, by ſtating and conſidering a ſingle queſtion—What is knowledge? Is it any thing, that can be acquired by one man, for another?—We may as well ſay, that the pains which

parents take, to teach their children to walk, are uſeleſs; becauſe perſons may be found, who will give them ſufficient ſpecimens of walking, in the moſt graceful and elegant manner. The world would ſoon be in a truly ridiculous ſtate, if children were not taught the uſe of their own limbs, and waited to have walking transferred to them. This is exactly their moral and intellectual ſituation. They are not taught to uſe their own powers; and they imagine themſelves wiſe and virtuous, becauſe they have read or heard of the wiſdom and virtue of other people. You may ſee this truth very remarkably exemplified, in a great many of all your acquaintance. They conſtitute a ſpecies of beings, which have ever been unknown in a virtuous and manly age; and they have been produced, by the method we have had ſo long in faſhion, of enjoying knowledge, virtue, and even ſenſual pleaſure, wholly by reflection—wholly by reading of them. Try a ſentimental man, or a ſentimental woman, on any of the ſubjects, which they are diſſolving, and even dying upon, when reading ſome quaint tale; and you will find them wholly deſtitute of the genuine and uſeful principles of nature: not in the ſituation of perſons, who want to be induced to act juſtly and virtuouſly; but incapable of good impreſſions. There are no brutes on earth, ſo unfeeling, as theſe diſſolving, dying people; nor any perſons, ſo incapable of virtue, as thoſe who waſte their whole lives, in reading tales of the virtues of other people. Look on a modern mother, whoſe time is ſpent in reading hiſtories and novels, and enervating her own conſtitution, and that of her children, by the effects of ſentiments. Look back into antiquity, and ſee the virtuous

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matrons of Greece and Rome, fulfilling their duties, with an active and amiable dignity; teaching their children, to think and act, ſo as to contribute largely to the public happineſs—and you will ſee the difference between real and pretended knowledge; between a family, or a ſtate, where a few enquire and think, and the reſt read and aſſent; and a family, or a ſtate, where all enquire, think, and act for themſelves. It is like contemplating communities of totally different beings.——Admitting, therefore, that the truth may have been found, by any great and good men, this will not render enquiry unneceſſary in others, until a method be found, of transferring knowledge and virtue, as we transfer common commodities, from one man to another.

It is ſaid, that, as members of ſociety, we give up, in all caſes, a conſiderable part of our natural rights, in order to ſecure the enjoyment of the reſt. It ought to be ſo, in things which may be conducive to the ſecurity and proſperity of government. It is ſo. In all the communities of the world, we pay the full price of what we enjoy. What cruelty, then, to extend the requiſitions of power, to the thoughts of men; which cannot even be known, much leſs be regulated and governed?—We ſee, indeed, that they may be ſuppreſſed; and that whole nations may be reduced to the ſtate of talking brutes, without an idea, on the moſt important ſubjects, of their own acquiring; without a ſingle idea, but what is dictated by the civil power. There may be tyrannical governments, which cannot maintain their influence, without reducing the people to this ſtate of abjectneſs and wretchedneſs; and there have been perſons, who have pleaded

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for tyranny whoſe object and end is the injury of the people. But thoſe who entertain more humane and juſt opinions, think, that the deſign and end of government, ſhould be the happineſs of the people; which cannot ariſe, but from knowledge and virtue in the people themſelves.

We have already ſeen, how knowledge is to be obtained; and we conclude, that a government is excellent, and will produce knowledge and virtue in a people, in exact proportion, as it allows and encourages freedom of enquiry; and every government is pernicious to the world, in proportion as it reſtrains them. As men are preferable to brutes, and knowledge is preferable to ignorance; ſo is a free government preferable to a deſpotic one. What limitations and boundaries, may be expedient to give to this freedom, and to preſerve order and peace in our preſent political ſituations, will depend on the nature of thoſe inſtitutions. In proportion as they approach to that degree of excellence, which is ſuited to reaſonable and virtuous beings, they will enlarge the limits of enquiry, and gradually allow a more general toleration of opinion. Ignorance and vice only, have any thing to apprehend from enquiry. Truth and virtue are never injured by it. We have, accordingly, found men ſevere and cruel, in preventing the examination of abſurd opinions; while the great and certain truths of juſtice, temperance, and goodneſs, have been, in all ages, under all governments, and all religions, ſubjects of public and free diſcuſſion.

As to order and peace, they are valuable only when the means of happineſs; and the means are to be ſacrificed to the end,

end, not the end to the means. Turn your eyes to the deſpotic governments of the Eaſt, in all ages, where all is order and peace; while the people are in the loweſt ſtate of ignorance and miſery. Look back into the republics of Greece and Rome; conſider the preſent governments of Holland and England; where there is a good deal of ſeeming diſorder, from activity and liberty; and where the people are intelligent and happy. Men ſhould be governed as men, and protected in the free and proper uſe of all their faculties; and every power that reſtrains this uſe, leſſens the quantity of knowledge and virtue, which might have been produced, and is a real injury to the world.

Hardly any man can be ſo ignorant, or ſo illiberal, as to ſuppoſe this method of reaſoning may countenance licentiouſneſs and vice. This, ſome men think, would be the conſequence of an univerſal toleration of opinions. But licentiouſneſs and vice, ariſe from the abuſe of our powers—knowledge and virtue only can ariſe from the free uſe of them.

I obſerved, on Sunday laſt, it might alſo be objected, that I have taken unneceſſary pains, in a country, where all opinions are tolerated, and every man is at liberty to think and ſpeak as he pleaſes. This was mentioned, as the great diſtinction of our civil government; and the very circumſtance, for which we are envied through all Europe. This bleſſing, however, is not pure and unmixed. It has been procured us by philoſophy; where the benefit of free enquiry was ſo obvious and ſo great, that it could not fail of being extended to other

ſciences.

ſciences. We are much diſpoſed, in moſt caſes, to adopt the language of my text. "Leave this counſel, or this work, to "its own merit. If it be unworthy, it will come to nought; "but if it be good, ye cannot overthrow it."—There are ſome caſes, however, to which this rule is not extended; where men have been long in the habit of fiercely contending with each other. When the Reformation put the Scriptures into men's hands, Harry the Eighth, one of the moſt wanton tyrants, and moſt vicious men, that ever lived, accompanied them with articles of faith, from which they were not to deviate, in the interpretation of them. This, and even his cruelleſt perſecutions, did not hinder a variety of opinions being formed on the Scriptures: but when any of thoſe opinions were advanced, they were advanced, not as opinions, but as truths, to be ſubſtituted inſtead of the errors that were eſtabliſhed. It is one thing, to doubt of a man's opinion, or to differ from it; it is another, to ſay, "My opinion is truth, and muſt be put in poſſeſſion of the "honours and profits, which are annexed to yours." This is an infallible ſource of contention; and this has been the reaſon of intolerance and perſecution, among all the different ſects, which have ariſen ſince the Reformation. Parties have been formed, in great numbers; and it has been imagined, that ſuch diviſions were favourable to liberty. Liberty was never an object with any party, which we have any account of. An adventurous ſpirit, imagined he had diſcovered the truth; he thought it his duty, not only to divulge it, but to get it eſtabliſhed and honoured, inſtead of thoſe errors, which had uſurped its place. This is the hiſtory of ſects and parties. The greater the variety of

men's opinions, in ſuch caſes, the greater the confuſion and wretchedneſs of the public. This is the reaſon, why the civil magiſtrate has ever kept a jealous eye on all new opinions. The peace and ſecurity of the ſtate are endangered, where men are not content to think freely, and to offer their opinions, with modeſty, to the conſideration of the public; but aim to eſtabliſh them, at the expence of thoſe principles and cuſtoms, which it may be impolitic and dangerous to aboliſh. If free-enquirers in religion, had obſerved the ſame conduct, which has been obſerved by free-enquirers in philoſophy, the ſucceſs would have been the ſame. If they had offered their ſentiments to the conſideration of the world, with that diffidence and doubt, which we always find attending the publication of a philoſophical experiment or diſcovery, and left them to the public candour and juſtice, no angry paſſions could have been excited, and no diſputes ariſen. But they inſiſted that they were right, and all the world wrong. This made them hateful. They endeavoured to ſubvert the eſtabliſhed religion, in order to place their own in its ſtead. This brought on them the reſentment of the ſtate. They complained of perſecution, when, perhaps, they juſtly deſerved ſome puniſhment from the guardians of the public peace.

What I mean by this detail, is, to endeavour to make you ſenſible of the difference between liberty of conſcience, or a ſpirit of free-enquiry; and a ſpirit of faction. The object of the one is truth, and the natural advantages attending it; which are the virtue and happineſs of the world: the object of the other is the power, or the riches, annexed by policy to principles

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and doctrines. The ſpirit of free-enquiry, is beneficial, at all times, and under every government; the ſpirit of faction, is ever injurious. It has diſhonoured the name of liberty; and prevented that improvement and progreſs of knowledge, which it has ſeemed to ſerve. At the ſame time, therefore, that we ſhould contend for an univerſal toleration of opinions, and an unlimited freedom of enquiry, in all matters of knowledge, we may deteſt the ſpirit, that has long gone under this name; and has actuated moſt of our religious ſects and parties. Its object never was liberty; and if it could have advanced any religious ſect to power, it would have unrelentingly perſecuted all who diſputed its opinions. It is this intereſted contention of parties, which has confounded men's ideas, on the ſubject of toleration, and even affected our governments. The magiſtrate will ſay, "If I allow an unlimited freedom of enquiry, I furniſh arms "to be employed againſt myſelf, and againſt the peace of the "public." But this is a miſtake, and owing to not making a diſtinction where there is a very great one—between a diſpoſition to enquire, and an ambition for preferments and honours; between a love of truth, and a ſpirit of ſedition.

It is of very great importance to me, and to every man, who joins me in this place, to have this diſtinction underſtood, as much as poſſible, by the public. It is not unnatural to expect, that we may be miſunderſtood, as meaning, under pretences of reformation, to diſturb the peace of the public; or to obtain any of the emoluments, which are allotted to the eſtabliſhed religion. We not only diſavow any ſuch intentions; but declare

declare our diſapprobation of them. We do not think, that men want to be reformed in their principles, ſo much as in the ſincerity and honeſty, with which they ſhould act on them. If we had any view to reform others, or to get our plan adopted, inſtead of any other, we ſhould have deviated gradually and inſenſibly; and, at firſt, enticed people to ſtep a little, only, out of the old way. But we have paid no regard to any principles, becauſe they were cuſtomary and eſtabliſhed; and obſerved a conduct, which, on any views of policy and reformation, would have been the higheſt folly. We only mean to exerciſe a right of nature, in providing a form of devotion, which we can join in from our hearts; a right, when exerciſed without offence, and without any reſerved deſigns, which it is the duty of the civil magiſtrate to ſecure for every ſubject. When we ſhew, that we mean to diſpute the claims of the church, or of any religious party, to all the honours or riches annexed to their principles, we ſhall expect to be treated with ſeverity:—but while we only propoſe a method of worſhip, which will be of ſervice to us, and might be of benefit to the public, without affecting their opinions, we commit no offence; we do only what we have a right to do, by all the genuine laws of nature, of civil ſociety, and of religion.

LECTURE XII.

NATURE AND EFFECT OF PRAYER.

Εὐχὴ δ' αὐτῶν διδόναι τὰ καλὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ϗ̀ πλέον ϗ̓δέν.

The Lacedæmoniams beſeech the Gods, to grant them ſuch advantages as are really fair and good; and they pray for nothing more. Plut. of the Lacedæm.

It is not prudent to form wiſhes, before we know what things are fit to be deſired. Simplicius on Epictetus.

Aſk, and it ſhall be given you. Script.

THE ſubject of prayer, like every thing, which is not founded on any one, clear, and ſimple principle of nature, has ſeveral conſiderable difficulties attending it. On the one hand, the general perſuaſion and practice of the world, is in its favour; and this ſeldom happens, without good reaſons. We know this to be true, in caſes, where we have had proper opportunities of inveſtigating thoſe reaſons. On the other hand, the difficulties attending the proof, even of the being of a God; and when we have been ſatisfied on that ſubject; the higheſt probability, that he muſt act on general and permanent principles, which cannot be

be at all influenced by our applications, ſeem to militate againſt this duty, and to deſtroy its foundation. The world is accordingly divided into two parties, under the influence of theſe general principles; one of which takes up the duty, without examination, and with all the appendages, which have adhered to it, from time, ignorance, and artifice; the other totally diſregards it, becauſe it does not ſeem capable of being ſtated and demonſtrated, like a mathematical problem.—Here ſome perſons might wiſh to ſtop, as having made conceſſions, which render all further conſideration of the ſubject unneceſſary. It has been allowed, that the duty of prayer, is not, like that of juſtice or mercy, to be clearly and immediately deduced, from any ſingle and certain principle of nature. It may, therefore, be ſaid, that it cannot be a duty of moral obligation; that it muſt be liable to doubts; muſt have difficulties; occaſion diſputes; and produce uneaſineſs and miſchief in the world. Theſe concluſions, are not fairly made from the premiſes, allowing the premiſes to be juſt. There are obligations, not claſſed by philoſophers as moral principles, which are of greater importance, than any of thoſe principles themſelves; as the compoſition of ſome elements, may be more valuable than any of thoſe elements, eſtimated ſingly. Education, is not claſſed as a moral obligation; it is the reſult of ſeveral moral obligations; and is of more importance, than any of thoſe virtues, which are honoured by moraliſts, with the denomination of cardinal. It is, however, liable to all the doubts and difficulties, which attend the ſubject under conſideration; and thoſe circumſtances have had a ſimilar effect, to that produced on prayer. They have obſcured the

duty

duty itſelf; and made it extremely difficult to clear it of thoſe abſurdities, which render it rather injurious than beneficial. Men have actually divided for and againſt education, as they have, for and againſt the duty of prayer.

There is ſomething extremely humiliating, in this view of mankind. They ſeem incapable of making any conſiderable advances, without ſtraying into errors, when ſimple principles are to be combined. The ancients appear to have had much greater experience of this matter, than we have. We may poſſibly add to their errors; and, it is to be hoped, correct ſome of them, when we can venture, after their example, to make a rational uſe of thoſe vaſt ſtores of elementary knowledge, which the philoſophical world is now laying up. At preſent, we are far behind them. Thoſe great and divine virtues, which are the reſult of knowledge, which have communities for their objects, and elevate a man into a moral and divine exiſtence, we know hardly any thing of, but in conſequence of reading the ancients: our civil conſtitutions, our moral and religious ſyſtems, are incapable of producing them. I feel a mortification at the view of this compariſon; and more ſenſibly, becauſe I ſtruggle againſt ſome of the inconveniencies ariſing from the difference.——"What, can there be any diffi-
" culties on the duty of prayer?" the multitude would clamour, with violence and rage.—"What, doubt the duty of prayer?"—Yes, it is my cuſtom to doubt every thing, till I can have reaſons for believing it—Have you any reaſons for believing prayer to be a duty?——"Yes; we know that we ſhall get no good
" in this world, and ſhall be puniſhed everlaſtingly in the next,
" if

" if we do not pray; and you muſt be an atheiſt, and will be " tortured eternally in hell, if you doubt this matter."—— Theſe are our enlightened Engliſhmen; theſe conſtitute our renowned nation of philoſophers; they reaſon in this manner, on the moſt important queſtion that can affect ſociety. An Athenian, or a Spartan, would have regarded ſuch people, much as we regard Hottentots.

A plain and true hiſtory, of the opinions on which the duty of prayer is generally founded, and the follies and miſchiefs they have occaſioned, would appear too like a ſatire, for a moral diſcourſe, to be delivered from a pulpit. It may be proper to mention a few of them; and as tenderly as poſſible. The firſt is, that God is ſuch a one as ourſelves; with ſuperior faculties, indeed; but with ſimilar paſſions and weakneſſes; and with ſimilar parts and members of body. This ariſes, in ſome meaſure, from too much haſte, in making us religious. Children are taught to pray to a Being, of whom they can have no conception. The knowledge of him, is to be obtained only by an acquaintance with his works; and by an act and judgment of a mature underſtanding, on the wiſdom and goodneſs obſervable in nature. Children are wholly incapable of this judgment; becauſe they have not the knowledge, on which it muſt be formed; and are, conſequently, wholly incapable of having any idea of a God, but ſuch as is ſuggeſted to them by their inſtructors. This is done, by enumerating the principal endowments of humanity, and adding to their excellence. Children, very naturally, refer them to the human figure, which they are taught

taught to call a God: they conceive him to be of a larger ſize, in order to ſuit theſe greater powers; that he lives in great magnificence and ſplendor; and is ſurrounded with infinite multitudes of attendants and ſlaves. This is univerſally our firſt object of devotion. We are taught to believe, this Being acts, in the government of the univerſe, much as we do, when our power is unreſtrained—by mere will and pleaſure, and not by fixed principles and laws. We are enjoined to do ſome things, becauſe they will pleaſe him; and forbidden to do others, becauſe they will make him angry: and we are told, if we obſerve the firſt injunction, and pleaſe him through life, we ſhall be rewarded with a profuſion and extravagance, infinitely exceeding thoſe of earthly princes: but if we fall under his diſpleaſure, we ſhall find his vengeance as extravagantly unrelenting and cruel; for he will purſue us with pains and tortures, to eternal ages. This completes our education, on the being of a God, and the principles of a religious and moral conduct. And it cannot be wondered, that we think it neceſſary to pray to ſuch a Being; it is not to be wondered, that our prayers are introduced in proper ſtrains of compliment, and that we are earneſt in our importunities, to obtain his favour, and to avert his diſpleaſure.

It is nearly in vain, as to devotion, that ſome of us acquire better and more rational ſentiments: the people about us have not the ſame happineſs; and we ourſelves, never get perfectly free of the falſe impreſſions of education, unleſs we entirely renounce all devotion, and all piety. It is while we are endeavouring to avoid this, and to reconcile our principles of religion to our

improvements in knowledge, that we are diſtreſſed with the doubts and difficulties which attend this ſubject. We are ſoon taught, by experience, that our prayers do not avail with God, in the manner they do with men. We do not obtai one good thing for aſking it. Good and evil, happineſs and miſery, we find to have no relation to the humour and pleaſure of any Being, who acts at will; they ariſe from merit, or demerit, as any other effects do from their cauſes; and all things happen alike, to thoſe who do pray, and thoſe who do not pray.

We perſiſt in the practice of the duty; and reaſon in this manner:---" Though I cannot get rain, or fair weather, when " I pleaſe; though I pray for riches, or honours, or friends, and " do not obtain them; the reaſon is, that God knows what " is proper for me, better than I do myſelf; and means to " correct ſome ſecret fault of my mind, by withholding from " me what I deſire, and what I might otherwiſe have obtained. " It is my duty to acquieſce in his good pleaſure; and to ſay, " in every thing, Oh, God! thy will be done."——This diſpoſition is ſo much like piety, that every good man will correct it cautiouſly, and without ſeverity. It ſeems, in ſome caſes, to have led to a good conduct; but, in general, it has been injurious to virtue. All errors, even thoſe which aſſume the forms of truth, and are ſincerely acted upon as ſuch, produce more evil than good, eſpecially if they become ſteady and permanent principles of conduct. Miſtakes, in our purſuits of truth, are ſanctified by ſincerity, and become virtues, like expedients of temporary convenience and uſefulneſs: but they never ſettle into

principles, without becoming injurious on the whole. It is thus that God has ordained, that we ſhould never be inactive: the improvement, the virtue, and the happineſs of our minds, like the vigour and health of our bodies, require that our faculties ſhould be always employed. We can have no knowledge or happineſs in a ſtate of inaction: our errors will ever be in proportion to our want of induſtry; and we ſhall approach to perfection, as we employ our powers to the purpoſes for which they were given.

Theſe obſervations have been made, to explain ſome paſſages, in the lectures delivered here, which may ſeem contradictory. It has been often urged, that we ſhould tolerate errors in each other; becauſe errors, accompanied with ſincerity, may be innocently and virtuouſly acted upon; and may produce temporary conveniencies. But errors, when they are become fixed principles of action, though they may be objects of toleration, and men may have merit in ſincerely acting upon them, yet they muſt be like injuries in the ſource of a ſtream, moſt extenſively pernicious in their conſequences. It is not meant to inſinuate, that thoſe who ſincerely practiſe the duty of prayer, on the common principles of it, are bad men; though it may be evident, they act on principles, which, upon the whole, do them more harm than good. For inſtance—A man has an uſeful purpoſe in view, the accompliſhment of which may depend on ſome circumſtances, which he cannot influence. He prays to God, to order thoſe circumſtances according to his wiſhes. They come to paſs otherwiſe, and the man is unhappy, till he has awed himſelf

himſelf into a reſignation, by conſiderations on the abſolute dominion of God. This caſe is given, as the moſt favourable, upon the common notions of prayer, which could well be deviſed. We may be ſo far from looking on this man as vicious or criminal, that we may have reaſons to eſteem and honour him, though we may know him to be in an error, and may wiſh ſo good a mind were in the purſuit of happineſs, on thoſe principles, which alone can procure it.

We do not know, that the events of nature, which are the great objects of prayer, ſuch as ſeaſons, wind, thunder, and rain, are matters of will and pleaſure even in the Deity; they are all effects of cauſes, which are the effects of cauſes, in a ſucceſſion which we cannot trace. To pray, that all theſe proceſſes may be ſuſpended, in which the exiſtence and welfare of millions of worlds may be concerned, while ſuch a being as man is croſſing over a river, while his ſhip is conveying ſome paltry commodities from one ſpot of this little world to another, is a truly ridiculous and laughable conceit; like the deſire of a fly, that the revolution of the earth might be ſtopped, and this univerſe deſolated, that winter might not approach, and ſuſpend or put an end to its enjoyments or exiſtence. All prayers are thus reprehenſible, which aim at the operations of nature; they are all effects from cauſes; theſe effects are evidently wiſe and good; but they ſeem to be produced by fixed and unalterable laws; and we talk without reaſon, without authority, and without ideas, when we ſay even that the Deity controuls and varies them, by any thing analogous to human will.——In this

manner, the very foundation of the common principles of devotion are taken away. There is no room for that kind of traffick, which men are diſpoſed to carry on with the Deity; and we have no reaſon to apprehend, that we ever obtain any thing of God for aſking. The air which we breathe; the ſun which gives us light; the materials of our food and raiment; and the length of our lives; we ſee, are all produced by laws which never vary; and are regularly given, without the leaſt regard to our prayers. The natural powers of our minds, the uſe which we make of thoſe powers, in becoming virtuous and happy, in aſſociating with our fellow-creatures, in forming communities, and creating new relations, and new principles, are all on the ſame plan of ſettled laws, and admit of no intervention, from the will and pleaſure of any being. Is it to be ſuppoſed, then, that God has reſerved to himſelf this power in inſignificant matters?—If happineſs or miſery were to be adminiſtered, as capricious parents give pleaſure or pain to capricious children, we ſhould ſee a different conſtitution and management in nature; the ſun, the moon, and the ſtars, could appear or diſappear; the ſeaſons would revolve; and the earth would bring forth her fruits, in proportion to the good behaviour and piety of men. This would be juſt as wiſe, as good, and as probable, as controuling the winds or the waves, which obey laws, as certain, and as important to nature, as thoſe by which the planets move, and the ſeaſons are produced.

Thus far, and no farther, we may go with thoſe, who, ſeeing no reaſons for the common method of prayer, renounce all devotion,

votion, and think public worſhip irrational and uſeleſs. All the great principles, which influence mankind, have ariſen from ſome truths in nature, which have been miſapprehended, abuſed, and artfully and wickedly applied. The firſt child of nature, who bowed to the riſing ſun; the firſt man, who, in the difficulties and diſtreſſes occaſioned by darkneſs, ſaw the moon, and worſhipped her as a kind Deity, acted purely from the gratitude of his heart, and did his duty. This was probably the firſt religion. The abuſe commenced, when men wiſhed to engage theſe Deities on their ſides, to the neglect, and even to the injury, of other people. When knowledge advanced, ſo as to give us views of the univerſe, and of power, intention, and benevolence, in the government of it, the firſt ſentiments of men, on contemplating the works of God, were right; they were admiration and gratitude and joy. They found a pleaſure and a benefit in repeating this contemplation, as thoſe great ſentiments were renewed, and a moſt ſublime and charming character held before them, by which they might form and improve their own. This is the real principle of devotion; and the proper ground of all rational and uſeful worſhip. On this principle, when men aſked, they found, and were never diſappointed. They never contemplated the works of God, without raiſing in their own minds, the moſt pleaſing and moſt uſeful ſentiments: when they conſidered the perfections diſplayed in nature, with a view to improve the virtues of their own minds, they never failed of ſucceſs; for the moſt noble and commendable ambition was excited in them, to become wiſe and good, by viewing the great wiſdom and goodneſs which every part of God's works exhibited. This

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appears to me, to be the whole doctrine of devotion; and it would be difficult to deduce any duty more clearly than this, from the ſoundeſt and moſt rational principles of nature. And though moraliſts may not claſs it among thoſe virtues, which they ſhould have called elementary, rather than cardinal; yet all wiſe and good men, who underſtand thoſe great and combined principles, which actuate ſocieties, will ſee this duty in its proper light, and practiſe it, as its uſefulneſs and importance deſerve.

But it requires uncommon ſtrength of mind, to keep clear of the marvellous, on every ſubject, where the imagination is at all employed; or even where the heart is warmly intereſted. The firſt abuſes of devotion, probably aroſe, like the extravagancies of love, from indulging warm imaginations. The bounds of nature once tranſgreſſed, by the well-intended fictions of poetry, all the exceſſes of ſuperſtition were produced; and artful men laid hold of them, for the purpoſes of avarice and ambition. Hence the idolatry of the ancients, moſt of which we can trace, even at this time, into a poetical mythology, and the uſe of ſymbols, which were originally repreſentations of rational ſentiments. As a natural and reaſonable worſhip would have ſecured the improvement and virtue of the people; we ſee, in fact, that the abſurdities and extravagancies of ſuperſtition, riveted on them the chains of ignorance and vice. When Chriſtianity was firſt introduced, the author of it aimed to reduce this doctrine to its firſt principles. His Apoſtles deviated but little from his deſign; and the Church, for a few centuries, had

had a worſhip different from that of the Heathens. But when Chriſtianity entered into an alliance with the ſtate, was eſtabliſhed by Conſtantine, and made an engine of tyranny, to enſlave the people; the Gods and Goddeſſes of antiquity, only changed names, for thoſe of Chriſt, the Virgin, Angels and Apoſtles; the Gods were chriſtened, Mars into Peter; and Diana, or Venus, into the Virgin Mary; the altars remained; and all the ceremonies of their worſhip were heightened, or rendered more abſurd; and then transferred to the Chriſtian Saints. There is hardly any part of the public worſhip of Europe, which may not be traced to an idolatrous cuſtom of the Heathens. The abſurdity of theſe things is ſo glaring, that men, who have not great ſagacity, great candour, and great patience, are very apt to turn from public worſhip with diſguſt, as wholly founded in ignorance and ſuperſtition. The very language it has adopted, is puerile; and one might imagine our religious aſſemblies crouching before a capricious tyrant, or endeavouring to amuſe and coax into good-humour, ſome fluctuating, wavering, and paſſionate Being.

We have nothing to do in this matter, but to penetrate through the maſs of ſuperſtition; and we ſhall find the truths of nature to be ſuch as have been ſtated—few, ſimple, practicable, and uſeful. Let us be content with thoſe truths, and never exceed the limits in which they bound us. We ſhall then, in the performance of this duty, feel the ſame fatisfaction, which we do in any other rational and moral one. We may not have thoſe extravagant raptures, which ſome weak people are

thrown into, by ſuperſtition. All kinds of extravagance are unnatural. They are intoxications of little minds, who have not vigour to ſuſtain ſteady, calm, and permanent paſſions. Gluttony and drunkenneſs, are the miſtaken pleaſures of an ignorant ſenſualiſt; abſurd and extravagant raptures, are the pleaſures of the religious viſionary. We ſee they have ſimilar effects on the body and the mind. It muſt be thoſe rational and temperate virtues alone, which are pointed out by nature, and approved by reaſon and experience, which will lead to real virtue and happineſs.

LECTURE

LECTURE XIII.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF PIETY.

Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or ten thouſands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion; the fruit of my body, for the ſin of my ſoul?—He hath ſhewed thee, O, man! what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

WHAT is good, not only in appearance, to a particular perſon, and for a time; but really, univerſally, and for ever?—What is honourable, independant of municipal or political regulations and laws?—What is that virtue, which is the mean of univerſal beneficence and happineſs?—have ever been enquiries of the higheſt importance to mankind. All the credit of philoſophy; all the influence of religion and government; have been owing to the deſire and difficulty of obtaining ſatisfaction on theſe intereſting ſubjects. It is in vain to affect aſtoniſhment, that things ſhould be ſo ordered. Every advantage has its price; and every ac-

quiſition muſt be made with ſome pains. We know of no truths born with men; no beings with the privilege of intuition; and no golden age, when the virtues ſpring up, like the fruits and flowers of an ideal Paradiſe. It is poſſible, therefore, that no period may have exiſted, indeed none has exiſted, within the reach of hiſtory or tradition, in which any conſiderable number, or any whole nations of men, have ſucceeded in theſe enquiries; have clearly and perfectly underſtood the nature of virtue; or have been able to form their civil and ſacred inſtitutions to be the certain means of general happineſs. Men, however, have always entertained very ſtrong, though indiſtinct, apprehenſions, of ſome univerſal truths. They have appealed to them, on all occaſions, with an aſſurance of their reality; and have ſometimes acquieſced, even againſt their preſent intereſt, out of reſpect to the general belief of them.

This is not mentioned, as a proof of the exiſtence of thoſe truths. General belief, is no proof of any truth; no, not of an hiſtorical incident; much leſs, of a moral or intellectual principle. It can hardly be deemed a preſumption, in any ſuch caſe; and it is here mentioned, as a reaſon for enquiry into its cauſes; becauſe it may be occaſioned by the influence of error, as well as of truth.

The perſuaſion of an actual diſpoſition, in all the beings, and in all the parts of nature, to produce general order and happineſs, is grounded on the beſt of all poſſible foundations, experience, obſervation, and facts, truly and properly ſo called. Eve-

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ry thing in nature, is the effect of a ſufficient cauſe; and the capacity of that cauſe to produce its effect, is its virtue. If this be the caſe, in the inferior creation, in the diſpoſition and arrangement of all bodies unorganiſed; is it to be imagined, can it be poſſible, that this ſhould not be the caſe, in more exquiſite combinations, or in organiſed and animated beings!—Whether we ſuppoſe this to be, or not to be, poſſible, we are in poſſeſſion of the certain and univerſal definition of virtue; which is the capacity and diſpoſition of every being, to produce all the direct and natural effects of its powers; and, by thoſe means, to make itſelf and others happy. As every particle of matter may be ſaid to have its proper virtue, when it is capable and diſpoſed to produce all the good it is fitted for; ſo every being, or every ſociety of beings, is virtuous, when it can uſe all its powers, to produce their direct and natural effects.

But it may be ſaid, How could this definition be generally underſtood, or become the ground of a general perſuaſion, unleſs a ſtandard be referred to, in ſome being, or in ſome ſociety of beings, minutely and perfectly anſwering all the intentions of nature?—It is in ſearch of ſome ſtandard of this kind, that men have embarraſſed and confounded themſelves: and having found, every where, only imperfect and vicious beings, or imperfect and vicious ſocieties; ſome of them have haſtily concluded, that virtue is an idea; that there can be no general ſtandard of it, to which we are to refer; and we are left to provide for its exiſtence, production, and ſecurity, by the inveſtigations of philoſophy, and the inſtitutions of policy; or to wait

for the interpoſitions of the Deity, as it were, to remedy the defects of a haſty arrangement of things, and to perfect the work he had begun, by rendering the animated and intelligent parts of his creation, as capable, and as well-diſpoſed to anſwer their ends, as thoſe which are unanimated and unintelligent are to anſwer theirs; and to furniſh us with a ſtandard of knowledge and virtue, for that important purpoſe.

But that ſtandard was always to be found in nature, merely by attending to the reſult of experience. As day and night, and ſummer and winter, could not take place, if the ſeveral great bodies of the univerſe were not to obey the laws aſſigned them; ſo the purpoſes for which human beings have been formed, could not be anſwered without virtue; men could not be uſeful and happy, unleſs all their powers were to produce their proper effects, in making them intelligent and good. All the experience of human life, has ever been furniſhing proofs of this truth. For though there be no perfect beings, or perfect ſocieties, on earth, as models for imitation, and proofs to which men may refer; the conſtant reſult of experience will anſwer all the ends of ſuch models; and actually furniſhes a general ſtandard, to which the virtues and vices of the world are ever referred. That ſublime character, which is the reſult of true religion; which is the conſequence of contemplating the wiſdom and goodneſs, to be found in all the diſpoſitions of nature; or what the Prophet beautifully expreſſes, by "walking humbly with God;" is the utmoſt perfection of human virtue; the higheſt philoſophic attainment; and the effect of the moſt accurate and extenſive knowledge.

knowledge. In periods of ignorance and vice, God cannot be propoſed as an object of imitation; the wiſdom and beneficence to be found throughout all his creation, cannot be referred to, as the ſtandard of virtue; and piety muſt be a ſtage of human excellence, totally unknown. We, accordingly, ſee, that the multitude ſubſtitute wretched and injurious ſuperſtitions inſtead of it; in which they are ſoon made the dupes and the ſacrifices of the ambition and avarice of impoſtors. Thoſe who are, or who affect to be, a little above them in knowledge, and who can juſt free themſelves from the groſſeſt impoſitions, are in a ſtate of intellectual anarchy and confuſion; and are only the more profligate, and the more contemptible, for having eſcaped the terrors of their native ſuperſtitions.

This is truly the character of modern free-thinking. The glorious names of philoſopher and free-thinker, are aſſumed by men, who have not one pretenſion to them, but that of diſregard to national prejudices. This is the mere effect of that univerſal commerce and correſpondence, which have taken place among nations. In this reſpect, the naturaliſt, who goes round the world, to collect its productions; the pretended philoſopher, who is ſuch from vanity; the poet, who flies from place to place, from neceſſity; the artiſt, who travels to get his bread; the youth, who rambles, becauſe it is the faſhion; the paraſite and lacquey in his train; together with thoſe infamous ſwarms, which a capricious vanity is enticing from almoſt all parts of the world:——all theſe are free-thinkers; *i. e.* they would feign to diſbelieve all the creeds of all the countries they have

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diſtinguiſhed by their preſence; and having imagined themſelves once into a habit of diſbelieving, they treat all virtue, and all piety, with the ſame ignorant and impertinent profaneneſs; and diſregard every thing, but the axe or the gibbet, which obliges a man to be honeſt and uſeful in the world.

The character of God, is not therefore an univerſal ſtandard of virtue. The knowledge of him, is the laſt attainment of real philoſophy; a ſcience but little known and cultivated among mankind. Where it is known, it furniſhes additional and indiſputable proofs, that virtue conſiſts in a power and diſpoſition to anſwer the purpoſes of nature; that, by virtue only, all things uſeful and good and happy are to be obtained. Until we become capable of contemplating the wiſdom and beneficence of God, by a real and extenſive knowledge of his works; can make his character the ſublime model of virtue, and walk humbly with him; we muſt be content with a lower ſtandard, but of more general uſe; the neceſſary reſult of experience, in all the poſſible ſituations and circumſtances of man.

This experience has furniſhed innumerable and indiſputable proofs, that virtue is the only road to happineſs; and that vice certainly leads to miſery. For, though no private character; no public ſociety, has given ſpecimens of all the virtues and their effects, and all the vices and their effects; yet, in the caſes of a few of them, all theſe ſpecimens may be obtained; and all the public and private actions of men, and their conſequences, are proofs of the validity and authenticity of this univerſal ſtandard.

From this experience, made in ſituations of infinite variety, ingenious and good men have collected maxims, doctrines, and ſyſtems, which may perhaps deſerve to have ſome regard, on account of their origin; but to which we ought never to refer, as the rules of virtue. Theſe rules ſhould be left, as God has left them, in the knowledge of his works, and in the experience of good and evil. For if written laws had been the beſt principles of human conduct, he would not have left the contrivance or compilation of them, to the wiſdom and integrity of man.

Having, therefore, an univerſal incentive to goodneſs, in the experience of all mankind—why ſhould we be ever at a loſs in regard to duty; to the manner of anſwering God's intentions concerning us; and making ourſelves and others happy?—If we are attentive and induſtrious, in the acquiſition of knowledge; if we think juſtly, and always ſpeak what we think; if we do unto others, as we would they ſhould do unto us;—the univerſal experience of mankind, the vicious, as well as virtuous among them, aſſure us we ſhall be happy. Societies, in a moral eſtimation, are actual individuals, to be governed by the ſame principles, and with exactly the ſame effects. It is a truth, which art and policy may ſophiſticate, but not confute, that, as a private man cannot be happy, but while he is anſwering the ends of nature, in the uſe of all his powers; ſo a community can never be happy, unleſs it be virtuous.

The diſtinctions, therefore, which even a Monteſquieu may have made, in the general principles, which ſhould actuate va-

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rious forms of government, may be ingenious, as pointing out facts; but are puerile and injurious, as furniſhing principles of legiſlation, and juſtifying the cuſtoms and meaſures of tyranny and oppreſſion. As, in private life, there is no diſtinction, but what is created by ſophiſtry, between honour and virtue, or between the great principles, which ſhould govern men in different ſituations: ſo, in ſocieties, there is really no difference in the ends which ought to be anſwered by their inſtitution; and there can be no difference in the great and general means of obtaining thoſe ends. This is alſo proved by experience, which furniſhes a ſtandard to communities, as well as individuals; and has ever proved, that no ſociety can be happy, whoſe conſtitution is not wiſely formed; whoſe laws are not adminiſtered with integrity; and who, in regard to other ſocieties, ſtands not exactly as man to men; and does not obſerve the ſame rules of juſtice and beneficence, which are the neceſſary and univerſal principles of order and happineſs.

The conduct of nations, is as eaſily decided upon, as that of individuals. All moral and political, as well as natural, beings, are ſubject to the eternal and univerſal law, which aſſigns happineſs, only to a wiſe, juſt, and beneficent conduct.

But modern ſocieties are yet in an ignorant and ſavage ſtate. Obſerve, I do not ſay, that all the inhabitants of modern kingdoms are ſavages; but I affirm, that ſocieties are to each other, in a ſtate analogous to that of individuals among ſavages. They have an indiſtinct and imperfect ſtandard of univerſal virtue, to which

which they refer, and which they call the law of nations; as ſavages have an imperfect reſtraint on them, which they call government. But the fact is, that, with the one and the other, ſtrength and power are the ſole principles of right and property; and every thing is to be done, which may be done with impunity. Hence the prevailing political doctrines—that there exiſts in every ſtate, an abſolute, unlimited power; and that whatever be determined by ſuch power, muſt be right. This is a piece of ſophiſtry, perhaps, worthy the deſcendants of Goths and Vandals; but very contemptible in the eſtimation of reaſon. An individual could not act, if there were not a principle in him, to determine his powers, and which may be called abſolute. But by what kind of reaſoning can it be aſſerted, that the determinations of that principle are right, merely as ſuch? Societies are exactly in the ſame ſituation. They muſt have a principle, to determine all their powers to action; but that determination, as ſuch, does not conſtitute virtue or vice.

Having theſe ideas of ſocieties, as moral or immoral beings, to be regulated by the univerſal principles of reaſon and goodneſs, exactly in the ſame manner as an individual; we muſt view the preſent ſtate of public ſocieties, with humiliating and melancholy ſentiments. It is preſumed, no perſon, accuſtomed to attend here, will think it improper to interrupt the ſeries of our moral enquiries, for one day, when the nation has been ſo lately called upon to humble itſelf before God for its ſins,* and to

* This Lecture was read a ſecond time on Sunday the firſt of March, 1778. The preceding Friday had been appointed as a public faſt, on account of the American war.

pray for ſucceſs, in deſtroying thoſe who counteract its views and meaſures. What ideas men can entertain of the Deity, who is thus ſolicited to go forth with every bloody band, from that which attends an Arabian robber, in his daily depredations, to the diſciplined armies of thoſe who are called civilized and religious princes,—it is extremely ſhocking to reflect! The beſt excuſes which can be made, for the general impiety which ſuperſtition produces, when the flames of war are conſuming the world, is, that thoſe men, who ſolicit him on ſo many different and contradictory occaſions, either diſbelieve the exiſtence of a God, or that every nation has its particular Divinity, who is to adopt its views, and to favour all its enterprizes.

The moral and political views of things are not more pleaſing. While the world was obviouſly teeming with the moſt important events; while all things bore an evident tendency to a revolution of the utmoſt conſequence; while the avarice of diſſipation, luxury, and profligacy, on the one hand, and the parſimony of painful induſtry, the jealouſy of a ſuppoſed inferiority, and the recollection of paſt injuries, on the other hand, were preparing thoſe evils, which have ſevered from each other the great and eſſential parts of the Britiſh commonwealth;—what wretched talents and principles were exhibited, in diſcuſſing the rights of mankind!—While events, which involved millions in miſery, were ſucceeding each other with rapidity; thoſe who had acceſs to their origin, made it the theatre of contention, for the paltry advantages, which might attend the direction or controul of them. Poſterity will look back with aſtoniſhment, to this great epoch in the hiſtory of nations; will

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ſee a vaſt empire formed, by what may be called caſualties, deſtitute of general principles to unite it, and diſmembering, by the diſagreement and diſcordance of its parts; while thoſe, who were near the helm of this enormous machine, inſtead of ſtudying to comprehend its nature and conſtruction, were driven, by their neceſſities, to be employed wholly in contending for the emoluments accruing from the direction of public meaſures, whether good or evil.

Philoſophers, as they are called, and men of talents in humbler life, have been, in the time, either the ſycophants of any patrons in power; or have contended with each other, on exploded principles of politics. For whether government be the appointment of a pretended religion; whether originating with the Patriarchs; or owing to a ſocial compact?—are not matters worthy of enquiry. If it produce happineſs at home, and be juſt and beneficent to all the world; it is good, it is valuable, and ſhould be ſupported: if it be otherwiſe; if it render the people corrupt, depraved, and miſerable; if it be unjuſt and oppreſſive to its dependants and neighbours; its origin is not worth inveſtigating: for, be its deſcent what it may, it is an injury, an evil, and a curſe; and mankind may, and ought to treat it as ſuch.

A very ſlight knowledge of the hiſtory of Europe, would clearly determine all the controverſies on the origin of all its ſocieties. They have all had their principles and forms from clans of robbers, who iſſued from the northern parts of it, and lived in a continual ſtate of war and rapine. When thoſe ferocious

had laid waſte and poſſeſſed themſelves of the territories of their neighbours, the head of a particular banditti became king, his companions lords or barons, and the people more or leſs ſlaves, as they were more or leſs ſubject to military diſcipline. The ſocieties formed by theſe people, introduced the ſpirit and principles of depredation throughout the greater part of the world; and all the ſtratagems and actions of nations towards each other, have been, ever ſince, almoſt without controul, from reaſon, virtue, or goodneſs.

It cannot ſignify, whence wicked nations have ariſen; their prayers and humiliations cannot avail them in their diſtreſſes; there is no path to real proſperity and happineſs, for ſocieties, as well as private perſons, but that of wiſdom, juſtice, and beneficence; and God hath ſhewed all beings, moral and political, as well as natural, what is good, and what he requireth of them, to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with him.

LECTURE

LECTURE XIV.

MORAL WISDOM.

Happy is the man that findeth wiſdom; and the man that getteth underſtanding.

ALL the rational interpreters of the writings of Solomon, have defined wiſdom to be moral virtue, in order to account for the many and wonderful effects which he attributes to it. Their reaſons do not appear to be convincing. For all theſe effects would ariſe better from the common definition of wiſdom; a clear and comprehenſive knowledge of thoſe things, which are of importance to us, and contribute to our happineſs.

The beſt talents of many ſpeculative and witty men, have been exerciſed on the ſubject of final cauſes; that is, on the deſigns and purpoſes, with which the various proviſions of nature are made. It is not to be wondered, we ſhould often ſpeak ridiculouſly, when we attempt to point out thoſe deſigns; for they relate to a plan, which takes in the univerſe; which it is impoſſible we ſhould comprehend; and of which we cannot juſtly be ſaid to have any idea. There are hardly any caſes, then, in which we may be able to point out, clearly and certainly, all

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the purpoſes of that Being, who is unſearchable, and whoſe ways are paſt finding out. Men, who employ themſelves in this way, act commendably, no doubt; but they run into numberleſs errors; and their attempts have fallen under the cenſure and ridicule of ſatyriſts and wits. This want of ſucceſs, on a ſubject, where but very little ſucceſs can poſſibly be obtained, has given riſe to a light and airy philoſophical ſect, which has taken a ſhorter and eaſier way to diſtinguiſh itſelf; the members of which, becauſe they have not had the abilities, or the induſtry, to find out any of thoſe deſigns, have denied there are any; and have generated a new and faſhionable kind of reaſoning, which is extremely well ſuited to the diſpoſitions of men at preſent. It requires no exertion of the underſtanding, no knowledge of facts, no arrangement of them, no deductions, and no attention to conſequences. Cauſes produce their effects by neceſſary laws; and they are good or evil by chance.

This doctrine will not ſerve the purpoſes of life; and none of its abettors ever acted uniformly on it, even for a ſingle day. Nature ſeems to act by general laws, and neceſſary ones; that is, they uniformly have their effects. Induſtry inſures ſucceſs; this is the reaſon, why virtuous and vicious men, in different tracks, are equally ſucceſsful, and often equally glorious. Nature is acquitted of blame, if we ſuppoſe it to act without deſign, and by neceſſary laws, which may chance to have good or bad effects. On ſuch a ſuppoſition, all notions of virtue and vice are annihilated; and if it depended on the reaſoning and opinions of ſome perſons, there is no doubt, but all diſtinction

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of them muſt be totally loſt. We ſometimes feel much better than we reaſon; and finding theſe neceſſary laws leading us, in any caſe, into miſery, we take the liberty of rendering them unneceſſary; and, by a courſe of experiments, differently made, we produce a ſeries of effects, as different from the former, as light is from darkneſs. It is ſome time before we can obtain this experience; before we can certainly know, that the right uſe of our faculties and powers, will produce knowledge, virtue, and happineſs; and the wrong uſe of them, will produce ignorance, vice, and miſery. In the former caſe, we follow the plan, purpoſe, and deſign of nature, or of God; in the latter, we do not: and yet we act under the general and neceſſary laws of the univerſe. This is all we know of final cauſes. What I mean, by giving you any account of them, is, to explain myſelf, in ſaying, that God deſigns, by means of knowledge and virtue, to render us happy; or rather, that virtue and happineſs are the regular, natural, and neceſſary effects of knowledge or wiſdom.

Here a difficulty may be thrown in the way, by an appeal to facts. It is not at all doubted, but knowledge has been making great advances in this country, for many centuries; and yet neither the morals nor the happineſs of the people have been improved. Men generally talk of public principles and cauſes, with almoſt as much ignorance, as they do of the ways of Providence. We may ſafely deny, that the people of this country have been making, for any time, any great and obvious advances, in the moſt eſſential branches of knowledge: every defect and irregularity in their

their morals, may be clearly and undoubtedly traced to the groſſeſt want of knowledge; and our doctrine, relating to the intentions of God, and the laws of nature, may be exemplified in every immoral fact, which can poſſibly ariſe.

It is not to be queſtioned, that our natural philoſophers have done honour to themſelves and their country, by an induſtry and ſagacity, which may have very great and beneficial conſequences. They have inveſtigated laws, by which particular phenomena may be accounted for; and they have furniſhed principles for manufactures and for the arts, which have been very advantageouſly and beneficially employed. But theſe things do very little, if any thing, towards advancing knowledge among the people. They may have ſome ſlight and accidental benefits, from the uſe of theſe better principles, which have been produced by other perſons; but this has no effect on that general diſpoſition and habit of their minds, which determines them to be virtuous or vicious, happy or miſerable. The principles on which a houſe is built, or an arch turned, have been diſcovered by repeated experiments, and are now ſettled as rules. The common maſon, who acts from thoſe rules, is not the more improved in his own mind, for the improvements which have been made by others in his art. He may be in the ſame ſtate of mental infirmity, though not in the ſame ſtate of inconvenience, with the firſt ſavage who huddled up a hut, or who felled a tree acroſs a river. This cannot well be avoided in mechanics and the arts; the diſcoveries of one man, muſt often be laws for thouſands, who anſwer the general purpoſes of

buſineſs, by this kind of borrowed knowledge; and are abundantly recompenſed, by the ſhare they enjoy of thoſe common advantages, which are produced by their united induſtry, in the application of principles not their own. But, in morals, the caſe is not the ſame. No man can be virtuous or happy for another; and no man can furniſh him with the means of virtue, but himſelf.

The truths of morality, like all other truths, are diſcovered only by trials and experiments. The principles of moral conduct would be totally inſignificant, if they did not lead to ſome ends; and if a certain manner of exerciſing our faculties, a certain manner of acting, had not been found, by repeated experiments, to have made us happy, and a different manner to have made us unhappy—we ſhould never have had any principles of morals. This ſcience, therefore, which, under its own name, but more eſpecially under that of religion, has been conſidered as a matter of mere ſpeculation, and abounding with doubts, uncertainties, and difficulties, is as plain and as clear as geometry; it depends on facts, which cannot eaſily be miſtaken; becauſe the whole world is collecting and obſerving them: and it has this advantage over other ſciences, that all men have an equal intereſt in the ſucceſs of their enquiries. Morality, therefore, is the proper ſcience of man. All other branches of knowledge are inſignificant, but as they are conſequences from moral principles, or may afford them ſome aſſiſtance, in embelliſhing and ornamenting human life.

The beſt things, however, are ſubject to the groſſeſt abuſes. The firſt diſcoveries of aſtronomy, were very ſoon abuſed into

aſtrology, and fortune-telling: and the plain and common principles of morality were no ſooner diſcovered, than they were turned to advantage, by crafty men, and made the commodities of a moſt lucrative trade. Prieſts were appointed all over the world, by means of this impoſture, which was favonred by the indolence and credulity of ſimple minds. There are no circumſtances in the hiſtory of mankind, ſo injurious to the general virtue and happineſs of the world, as thoſe which gave riſe to this impoſture. I do not mean, for the common reaſons which are alledged on this ſubject. Prieſts may not, individually, be worſe than other men: we have many clear and honourable proofs of the contrary; though they may, profeſſionally, have been the cauſes of the greateſt miſchiefs. This has not been owing, merely to the part which they have generally taken in political contentions: it has not been owing merely to their making the other world the means of their power and riches in this: it has not been owing wholly to the abuſe and perverſion of their influence in countenancing tyranny—No; theſe are trifling evils, to that univerſal darkneſs, which overſpread the earth, at their inſtitution. Let us allow men the exerciſe of their underſtandings, and the power of acquiring, by their own induſtry, thoſe truths which are eſſential; and we may appoint as many Prieſts and Popes and Muftis and Tyrants as we pleaſe: the world will be ſoon cleared of them. This aſſertion is not aimed, as a random ſhaft of ſatire, at orders of men, who have not only been held ſacred, but have been objects of adoration. I have no perſonal intereſt in injuring any profeſſion; for there is none on which I can poſſibly have any advantageous views, with-

out incurring infamy; and there is none I would wiſh an injury to, but as it might be attended with advantage to mankind.

The firſt prieſts were probably botaniſts, chymiſts, phyſicians, natural philoſophers, and aſtronomers. Theſe performed cures, ſhewed wonders, and were in the rank of thoſe impoſtors, who, under the name of conjurers, continue to deceive the world.—The poets took up the principles and actions of theſe men; perſonified ſome of them; and referred thoſe they could not underſtand, to the operations of inviſible powers, with whom the impoſtors pretended to converſe, and whoſe meſſengers and delegates they were ſuppoſed to be. Theſe inviſible beings once introduced into the ſyſtem of nature, and being ſuppoſed to cure diſeaſes, to perform miracles, and to foretel events, men were ſoon prevailed upon, not only to conſign their health and fortunes to their direction, but even their underſtandings, and ſenſes; and to receive rules from them, for the conduct of life, which could only be derived from thoſe ſenſes and underſtandings: rules, which gradually deviated from the effects of experience, until all attention was transferred from experience to the prieſt, and religion was ſet in oppoſition to morality.

This is the great æra of univerſal ignorance, and univerſal wretchedneſs; from which the groſſeſt injuries, and moſt ſanguine cruelties, have not yet rouſed mankind to emancipate themſelves. This is the ſecret, but univerſal, cauſe of thoſe appearances, which are ſo unaccountable to men, who do not attend

to it. And this ſolves a problem in morals, that knowledge and philoſophy ſhould make rapid advances, unaccompanied by virtue and religion. The minds of men, in general, throughout the world, are totally and incurably enſlaved. They have no rules, or principles, or doctrines, beſides thoſe they learn from authority; and when that authority is changed, they change: that is, they change their leſſons; but are abſolute ſlaves, in all caſes alike. The truths of philoſophy, ſince the days of the immortal Bacon, have been derived moſtly from experiments; but thoſe experiments are made by a very few people. Credulity, therefore, reigns in philoſophy, as much as ever; and that vaſt multitude, who adopt the name of Newton, are juſt ſuch philoſophers, as thoſe who adopted the opinions of Deſcartes. In morality it is exactly the ſame. We wonder, as men ſeem to approach to truth and nature in their moral principles, that that they do not alſo in their moral conduct.——The Reformation, which has certainly brought us, in our public principles, ſomething nearer to truth, has been reproached, by Roman Catholics, as having left us, at leaſt, as immoral as it found us. And what impartial and candid man will ſay, on a view of thoſe countries which are inhabited by Proteſtants, and thoſe inhabited by Roman Catholics, that, for all the purpoſes of moral virtue and private happineſs, there is the leaſt preference to to be given to the one, rather than the other?—It makes very little, if any, difference, to a man, what principles he is taught, if he is taught them by authority.——Knowledge, therefore, is really and truly a very different thing, from what it is generally apprehended to be. It can be obtained in no caſe, and leaſt of all in morals, without experience and reflection.

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The time, therefore, which we uſually beſtow on the inſtruction of our children, in principles, the reaſons of which they do not underſtand, is worſe than loſt; it is teaching them to reſign their faculties to authority; it is improving their memories, inſtead of their underſtandings; it is giving them credulity, inſtead of knowledge; and it is preparing them for any kind of ſlavery, which can be impoſed on them:—whereas, if we aſſiſted them in making experiments on themſelves; induced them to attend to the conſequence of every action; to adjuſt their little deviations; and fairly and freely to exerciſe their powers—they would collect facts which nothing could controvert. Theſe facts they would depoſit in their memories, as in ſecure and eternal treaſures; they would be materials for reflection; and, in time, be formed into principles of conduct, which no circumſtances or temptations could remove. This would be a method of forming a man, who would anſwer the end of his being, and make himſelf and others happy. Compare this method, only in ſpeculation, for I cannot refer you to practice, with the common one, of impoſing principles on the memory by fear, which ſhakes and enervates the very eſſence of the man. Theſe principles remain, only while the awe of that authority remains; and if it ſhould be ſucceeded by an authority enjoining other principles, the man muſt adopt them, as he did the others; for the operation is only an act of his memory. It is no wonder, that ſuch perſons are no ſooner out of ſchool, than all effects of their education are loſt; and they are as uſeleſs, as miſchievous, and as wretched; nay, more ſo, than thoſe who have had no education at all. It is no wonder, that men,

thus

thus formed, ſtand in need of being often reminded of their duties, when the principles of them are depoſited only in their memories; for the memories of men become treacherous: whereas, that moral knowledge, which is acquired by experience and reflection, ſeems to enter into the eſſence, and form the ſoul of a man; and it cannot fail of having its effects, in making him uniformly virtuous and happy.

If this were univerſally the caſe, the world would be governed by reaſon, and not by opinion. The principles of truth would induce men to act well; and the whole earth would ſoon be cleared of thoſe errors, which determine them to ſlavery, vice, and wretchedneſs. This moral knowledge, therefore, is true wiſdom; and of this Solomon could not ſay too much. Speculative opinions, on beings, and the relations of beings, which are the creatures only of imagination, are mere amuſements. They may be injurious, as they miſemploy our time and talents. Practical and uſeful wiſdom, is the knowledge of thoſe objects, and of thoſe relations, which affect us, as men inhabiting this world. This may not open ſo large and unbounded a field, as is ſhewn by the philoſophy and religions of the world; but it is the only field of certain and uſeful knowledge; and we are circumſcribed only by our neceſſities, our wants, our happineſs, and the boundaries of our lives. We had better leave things which are abſolutely beyond our reach, till ſome circumſtances may lead us nearer to them. In the preſent ſtate, if our ſenſes cannot verify the exiſtence of any thing, we can have no clear and certain conception of it. Speculations concerning

cerning ſuch an imaginary object, may ſhew in us ſome factitious talents; but they lead us not to knowledge. Opinions and rules and principles, which are not to us the reſult of experience; which are not ſubject to the examination of our underſtandings—may be truths to ſuperior beings; but they are myſteries, and therefore totally uſeleſs to us. We are ſo fortunate—and, in ſpite of a harſh, moroſe, and gloomy atheiſm, I will aſcribe it, with grateful pleaſure, to the deſign and goodneſs of that Almighty Being, who actuates the univerſe—that man may clearly and thoroughly comprehend, all the truths neceſſary to his happineſs; and need be ignorant only of thoſe beings, thoſe things, and thoſe relations, in which he has abſolutely no concern.

LECTURE

LECTURE XV.

THE NATURE OF VIRTUE.

If there be any virtue——

WE may uſe theſe words, in order to refer to ſome difficulties, which vice and bad policy have thrown in the way of our enquiries, on the plaineſt and moſt important ſubject. Men have differed from each other totally, in their ſentiments of that right and moral conduct, which all have acknowledged to be neceſſary to the happineſs of life.

Among the Greeks, virtue conſiſted in an enthuſiaſtic love of the ſpot on which they lived, attended with a jealouſy and contempt of all the world. In Rome, it was frugality, courage, and love of one's country. Among the firſt Chriſtians, it was a ſevere ſelf-denial, and a patience under ſufferings; with a view to divine interpoſitions, and the bleſſings of a future ſtate. Among the Goths and Vandals, our reſpectable anceſtors, the Roman virtue of courage, and the Chriſtian qualities of ſelf-denial and patience, were ſometimes blended and forced into the moſt extravagant exceſſes. But their character ii c virtues, if they could be ſaid to have

have any, conſiſted in attentions to ceremonies. We need not be at much trouble to obſerve, that neither of theſe virtues anſwer the idea of that univerſal principle of happineſs, which is called moral virtue. Courage is a natural and advantageous diſpoſition; and when poſſeſſed by a people, it ſecures them from injuries; and if unaccompanied by other and ſuperior qualities, it leads to conqueſt and military glory. Nations, inſpired by this principle, and with whom this is the general motive to their beſt actions, differ, only in their power, from ſocieties of robbers, with whom, courage, and attachment to the intereſt of the community alone, conſtitute moral virtue.

Love of one's country, may be a virtue, or it may be vice. It is not, therefore, that general principle, which all muſt acknowledge to animate and direct the whole rational world. In bad communities, the attachment which is generally found in its members, to the intereſt of the whole, is produced by neceſſity and habit, in minds, deprived of the intelligence and feelings of men, and rendered brutral by oppreſſion, and by a bad education. Education, and forms of government, may reduce men to the ſituation, and inſpire them with the principles, of beaſts of prey; and their communities muſt be held together by the ſame bonds which aſſociate wolves, and make them dwell together, in ſavage friendſhip, for the purpoſes of plunder and miſchief.

Speculative moraliſts, as well as politicians, have created difficulties on this ſubject. It is probable, that in early and peacea-

ble ſtates, the natural principles of good conduct were ſoon and clearly inveſtigated: for ancient moraliſts and poets ſpeak of virtue with an enthuſiaſm, which was very commendable, under the direction of real wiſdom. As ſocieties degenerated, ſublimity was corrupted into the marvellous; and men ſought for wonders, inſtead of real and fixed principles. All founders of moral and religious ſects, who aimed at fame or advantage, rather than the public happineſs, have pretended to reveal myſteries, to ſpeak by inſpirations; and have confounded and deſtroyed the underſtandings of the common people, by double doctrines, which produced enigmas, allegories, fables, and parables; the key of which was either ſoon loſt, or depoſited with perſons who were to be paid for ſatisfying their anxious curioſity.

Theſe evils overſpread the world, and left but very few men the ability, or the liberty, to look back into Nature, and to conſider thoſe clear principles, by which ſhe ever effects her purpoſes. Thoſe perſons, who had this ability, ſaw ſo plainly, in nature, the original diſpoſitions and motives to virtue, that they ſuppoſed the ideas and principles out of which it aroſe to be innate; to be like impreſſions ſtamped on the ſoul at its firſt formation; and to be all born with us into the world. They conſidered the falſe opinions ariſing from education and policy, as corruptions of thoſe original principles, which in nature were all right and good.

Theſe ſentiments were ſucceſsfully combated by Mr. Locke; who, with great ſimplicity, and with the true ſpirit of a philo-

ſopher, traced our ideas into their ſources in the ſenſes. His accompliſhed and elegant pupil, Lord Shafteſbury, made the principles and rules of morality the objects of his inveſtigation; but as he had ſtudied Plato more than Euclid, his writings, though they muſt be allowed to have great merit in point of compoſition, are not free from ambiguity, and have been frequently either miſunderſtood or miſinterpreted. He is conſidered as the firſt who has given credit to that hypotheſis concerning the human mind, which attributes to it a ſenſe, called a moral ſenſe; and is, in ſome degree, analogous to thoſe ſenſes, by which we receive the impreſſions of outward objects. The preſent ſupporters of that opinion, do not ſeem to have underſtood their maſter, who writes, as he always does, in the ornamented ſtile of a polite ſcholar; and who demonſtrates and beautifies his propoſitions at the ſame time, by ſimiles and alluſions. It does not appear, that he ever meant to make this moral ſenſe a diſtinct and original part of the mind, which every man brought into the world with him. He does not conſider whether it be ſo or not; but ſpeaks to men, who, by experience and knowledge, are in that ſtate, when actions make inſtantaneous impreſſions on them of pleaſure or pain, in the ſame manner as outward objects affect the ſenſes. The moral ſenſe is formed by time and experience, and not born with us. So are all the natural ſenſes, not one of which is born with us; they are all created, ſome inſtantaneouſly, ſome in a little time, ſome in a long time, but all by experience. The moral ſenſe differs from a natural one, as much as the effect of reflection differs from ſimple feeling. But the conformation given by nature and education, may be ſo exquiſitely juſt in ſome men, that they may be ſaid to judge

of actions and principles by a kind of inſtantaneous ſenſation; which I own I think may be very properly called a moral ſenſe. The eye, as a ſenſe, is formed by the experience of many years; but when it is formed, it judges of diſtances and magnitude, of beauty and deformity, apparently by an immediate ſenſation; but, in fact, by a proceſs, which is the effect of experience. The mind is in the ſame ſtate, as to morals; it has judged of cauſes by effects, on all material occaſions; it has ſo aſſociated virtue with pleaſure, and vice with pain, that when the actions and principles under thoſe denominations preſent themſelves, they ſeem to act on the mere ſenſe, not as virtues or vices, but as pleaſures or pains. The preſent faſhionable affectation of ſentiment ariſes from the ſame cauſe. Perſons, whoſe organization is juſt, perfect, and delicate, are ſuſceptible of very lively impreſſions, from thoſe principles and actions, which experience has taught them to be good or bad. When they preſent themſelves again, the aſſociated ideas of pleaſure or pain immediately preſent themſelves; and before any judgment can be made; that is, before thoſe circumſtances, which have been often and ſufficiently examined, can undergo a ſecond examination. In time, they forget that experience and reaſon had any ſhare in claſſing the virtues and vices; and finding this moral intelligent ſenſibility ſeldom err, they refer every thing to it: ſo that we very commonly hear people ſay, "We act from our feelings; or "we judge of men and things, according as they excite our "ſenſibility."

In the education of a man, there is ſo little care taken of thoſe things, which are moſt eſſential to his character and happineſs, that

that it is not much to be wondered at, he ſhould be ignorant of the general principle of all his actions. That experience of good and evil, which ariſes wholly from an experience of pleaſure and pain, is made in early life, under pedantic and ignorant directors (totally ignorant of what is moſt neceſſary they ſhould know). Pleaſure and pain are aſſociated to wrong cauſes, by arbitrary inſtitutions. Virtue is changed for vice, and vice for virtue. Good actions are puniſhed. Integrity is harraſſed and ſtarved. And vice, under various forms, is rewarded with the pleaſures and advantages of virtue. In this unnatural medley and confuſion, we acquire that moral ſenſe, or conſcience, or judgment, or ſentiment, or ſenſibility, which is to determine the conduct of our lives. Is it any wonder, that our judgment, or ſenſibility, or whatever elſe we call it, ſhould be ſo confuſed and uncertain; and that we ſhould be ſo deſtitute of a rule to guide us through life?—It has often ſeemed to me very extraordinary, that ſo many ſhould eſcape the miſchiefs of education, and ſhould be able, from ſuch a motley experience, to refer their actions, or thoſe of others, to any inſtantaneous and uſeful principle.

There is a great deal of affectation in modern language, concerning ſentiment; but there is the ſame degree of truth in it, as there was in that concerning the moral ſenſe. We go, very early in life, through a courſe of experiments, on the effects of principles and actions. Thoſe effects are, literally, impreſſions on our ſenſibility; and they are claſſed under their reſpective heads; to which they, and all things analogous or ſimilar to them, are

are referred, in ſome cold and phlegmatic conſtitutions, by what is called judgment, which compares things with others that have formerly affected them; and judges in this manner of their nature and effects. Theſe perſons deny the doctrine of moral ſenſe and ſentiment, and imagine themſelves to be governed by reaſon: but they are not wholly; for, if, on conſidering and comparing actions, they did not conclude that pain or pleaſure would be the conſequences of them, they would not determine them to be virtues or vices. So that their ſenſibility, blunted as it may be, has ſome ſhare in governing their actions. But in perſons differently formed, whoſe pleaſures and pains are exquiſite, actions and principles are no ſooner preſented to them, than their ſenſibility is agitated by aſſociated ideas of pain and pleaſure; which makes them falſely imagine, that ſenſibility is the only principle to which actions are to be referred; and that they are, and ought to be, wholly governed by it. They do not recollect; for theſe ſouls of fire have not much the faculty of recollection—that this ſenſibility is formed and acquired by a ſeries of trials, and by an experience of actions, in which all the reaſon they had was employed, in ſeparating, comparing, and claſſing them.—This being done, and the nature of things ſettled, either truly or falſely, as it happened, reaſon is diſmiſſed, as too ſlow and heavy a faculty, and matters are moſt expeditiouſly managed by ſentiment alone. This is the cauſe of the inequality which we obſerve of theſe lively characters. For, taking no time to compare things which have partial and imperfect ſimilitudes, they mingle their virtues and vices together, in ſuch a manner, that one can hardly ever know whether to love or hate them; to aſſociate with, or to avoid them.

them. Perſons of this diſpoſition, ſhould have the utmoſt care and pains taken in their education. Their reaſon ſhould be ſo improved, as to be inſtantaneous in comparing and claſſing principles and actions; and then they might be ſafely left to the liveſieſt ſenſibility, which would never have the impreſſions of diſguſt and pain at the approach of virtue, or of ſatisfaction and pleaſure at the approach of vice.

This doctrine of a moral ſenſe, or moral ſentiment, is the preſent faſhionable one; and it may be true, when perfectly underſtood. That ſupported by Dr. Clarke, Dr. Cudworth, and others—of eternal relations—an imaginary and everlaſting rule of right—and principles and obligations in the abſtract, to be realized when men came into the world—is not now attended to; and it ſeems to have been adopted, in every caſe, by men who had employed moſt of their time on figures and algebraic ſigns, which repreſent quantities in the abſtract. Theſe perſons are, in fact, arithmeticians, and not philoſophers.

Man exiſts, and by wants is induced to act—and this neceſſity, and the method of acting, is common to all men. The firſt want is probably attended by ſome degree of pain; which is the firſt motive: the gratification of it is pleaſure; which alſo becomes a motive: and theſe wants and gratifications, which influence him, excite and form his ſenſe of pleaſure and pain. Our firſt knowledge conſiſts of things around us, as they excite in us theſe ſenſations. In this manner we perceive qualities, and ſome of the laws which things obſerve. From qualities,

ties, if we were well educated, we ſhould proceed to quantities; from quantities of extent in geometry, to quantities of power in mechanics and aſtronomy. In this manner, man might become truly the lord, though not the tyrant, of the creation. He would exerciſe a rational empire over nature; and make the world a convenient and happy habitation.

Virtue ariſes from the proper, natural, and vigorous exerciſe of our faculties. Man feels and thinks and acts, in order to be happy. This is all the knowledge we have of man. We cannot yet clearly and indiſputably trace the principles of thought and feeling, either into his organization, or to a being within him, called an immaterial ſoul. But he is certainly induced to act by motives, which affect either his ſoul or body (it does not ſignify which) and excite his ſenſe of pleaſure and pain. This is quite ſufficient, in order to underſtand the duties which he owes to himſelf and to others.

It may be objected, to this account of the general principles of moral virtue, that men do not ſeem to be conſtituted alike; and that they feel and judge of objects differently. Men are not exactly alike, any more than ſoils. They are alike, however, in the great principles which make them moral agents. They all love pleaſure, and they all hate pain. They even avoid pleaſure, when experience has taught them it will be injurious; and they ſubmit to pain, when they know it will be beneficial. Every man deſires and aims to be happy; and becomes ſo, if his experience has been properly made, his ſenſibility

lity juſtly formed, and his underſtanding properly cultivated. It is ignorance, it is the want of a juſt experience, of a well-formed ſenſibility, and a good underſtanding, that makes men ever become vicious. We vary from each other, it is true, but not beyond theſe boundaries, until we have the misfortune to become ideots or monſters.

The principles of Dr. Berkley, Mr. Hume, and others, are only the metaphyſical amuſements of brilliant and amiable talents: Thoſe great men queſtion the reality of every thing, except the ideas which are excited in our minds. If we only change terms, and ſuppoſe every thing we call real to be imaginary, or a viſion, there will be no ſubject of contention. Let us imagine that we exiſt, and imagine that we feel pleaſure and pain; we muſt imagine that we love the one, and hate the other; and we muſt imagine a ſyſtem of morals, in conſequence of imagining that we live together.

Some modern philoſophers, if they may be called philoſophers, have conſidered governments as the depoſitaries of rewards and puniſhments; and furniſhing the only motives to virtue, in ſocieties. But this opinion ariſes from a very imperfect view of things; and from that ſervility, that want of vigour, which we find in the ſentiments of men, who have been educated under arbitrary powers. A bad government, like a bad education, often perverts the powers of nature, miſleads the genuine diſpoſition of men to virtue, and totally corrupts their morals. Weak and ignorant legiſlators neglect morality, as a matter of private

ſpeculation and concern. A man would be ridiculed, in any country in Europe, who ſhould ſay, or ſeem to think, that virtue is not created by laws, but is the very foundation of all public and private felicity.

Experience, that only guide to truth, teaches us, that it is more important to a nation to be happy, than to have great territories, great treaſures, or great armies; which it may poſſibly make an ill uſe of, and employ to its own ruin. The profligate doctrine of Mandeville, is therefore fooliſh, as it is pernicious; for vices can be temporary benefits only to tyrants and robbers.

But real policy is a ſcience not yet underſtood. Governments have been falſely conſidered as cauſes, when they are only effects; and policy has been hitherto the art of blinding the people, in order to miſlead them. The idea of governing has been always a diſtinct idea, and not connected with that of making men happy. This is the reaſon, that all governments have been more or leſs at enmity with reaſon; and that they have, almoſt all of them, on every ſubject, moral, religious, or political, ſtrenuouſly endeavoured to ſilence it. Real policy, is reaſon and virtue acting on the largeſt ſcale; and, inſtead of being confined to the ſtate of an individual, are applied to the happineſs of nations; nay, of all mankind.

We may ſee that virtue conſiſts in the proper and natural exerciſe of our powers, in order to make ourſelves and others happy; that it depends not on reaſon, or a moral ſenſe, or ſenſibility;

ſibility; but on a ſeries of plain and ſimple experiments, on the cauſes of pleaſure and pain. Our character, our reaſon, our ſenſibility, or moral ſenſe, depend greatly on the manner in which this experience is acquired; and we may be aſſured, it is no uncommon attainment, merely to fulfil what the nature of man promiſes;—for reaſons which may be mentioned hereafter.

LECTURE XVI.

VIRTUOUS SATISFACTION.

In keeping them there is great reward.

IT is of great importance to the conduct and happineſs of life, not only that our actions ſhould be right, and our intentions, in performing them, ſuch as may be deemed innocent and commendable; but that our motives ſhould be all derived from nature, ſuch as will bear the examination of reaſon, and ſuch as are in due harmony with each other. Among the great numbers, who practiſe virtue with tolerable regularity, there are but few who trace their actions to principles. Even thoſe few are ſeldom unanimous in their opinions; and their differences affect the people, who are apt to be led by them. Thus philoſophical and religious ſects are formed; and the means which were intended by God for the happineſs of men, are perverted into occaſions of miſchief.

It is impoſſible to feel a virtuous inclination, or to perform a virtuous action, without pleaſure. This pleaſure has been improperly called the reward of virtue. A reward does not ſo much

much denote the conſequence, be it ever ſo advantageous or delightful, which is the natural and neceſſary reſult of an action, as thoſe advantages, which are beſtowed at the will of another. While, therefore, I have no doubt, that the arrangement in nature, by which virtue becomes neceſſarily happy, and vice neceſſarily miſerable, is the effect of divine wiſdom and goodneſs, and not of chance; yet I think it improper, inaccurate, and leading to bad conſequences, to ſay, that virtue is at all to be rewarded. Men annex wrong ideas to the term, which they transfer on morality, and even on God; and their ſyſtem becomes the ſervile ſyſtem of an eaſtern court; where there are no motives, but rewards at the will of a tyrant; and no morality, but what ariſes from ſelfiſhneſs.

Indeed, the effect of this miſapprehenſion is to be found, not only in the falſe glare of courts, where things are generally miſrepreſented; not only in thoſe ſtations, where noiſe and buſtle and buſineſs diſqualify us for calm reflection—but in the moſt diſpaſſionate regions of philoſophy; where men ſeem to be at perfect leiſure to examine truth, and to have no temptations to miſrepreſent it. Even here error and debate and contention have found their way; they have created violent diviſions, where there were no differences; and have induced men reciprocally to charge each other with dangerous miſtakes, on a ſubject, where languages only, perhaps, are to be blamed; and where no honeſt and good man can ever be dangerouſly miſtaken.

The ſatisfaction and pleaſure reſulting from acting well, have been piouſly and philoſophically referred to the goodneſs of God;

and a poet might have been allowed the licence to call it a reward, if he were allowed the impious licence of comparing princes with the Almighty. Reward, and the conſequence and effect of virtue, have hardly one circumſtance in common; and none but poets ſhould have ever ſaid, that virtue was rewarded. Let us ſay the plain truth—that happineſs is the neceſſary reſult of virtue; not by the will and caprice, but by the wiſe, eternal, irreverſible determination of the Deity: let us ſay, that no degree of real ſatisfaction, no kind of genuine pleaſure, can be enjoyed, but what ariſes from virtue.——What can be added to this? What are rewards, the moſt extravagant that can be imagined, and at the will of any being, to this truth, when properly underſtood?——Happineſs cannot come from rewards, be thoſe rewards heavenly or earthly. It is the accompanyment only of right thoughts and good actions.

Philoſophers and divines, have therefore taken unneceſſary pains, in deducing virtue from any adventitious principle; which, however, may have its effect on the general harmony of a good conduct. Men fell into errors, which are eaſily accounted for, when in the habit of generalizing their ideas, and referring powers to ſprings. They judged truly, that nature acted with great ſimplicity; and brought out every poſſible and neceſſary effect, from a ſingle cauſe: and the queſtion has been, what that ſingle principle is, in the human mind, which leads it to virtue? There could have been no difficulty on the ſubject, if the enquirers had been virtuous themſelves; but being extremely imperfect, both in their underſtandings and diſpoſitions,

diſpoſitions, their enquiries were often ill-directed; and they fixed on that motive to virtue, as a general principle, which they found moſt to influence themſelves. With one man, it was intereſt; with another, it was benevolence; with another, it was fear. This created a confuſion in the ſpeculative world; and this, and the difficulty of inducing men to act well, led Socrates, and other philoſophers, to ſuppoſe, the Deity would commiſſion ſome Demon, or ſome God, to deſcend among them, and adjuſt their principles and actions. Even Socrates, Plato, and the firſt men of Greece, ſeem, on this occaſion, to talk as orators and declaimers, and not as perſons, who had accurately and judiciouſly obſerved the principles and actions of mankind. If a God had deſcended, and told the world, in a language to be underſtood from pole to pole—this you are to believe, and thus you are to act—what would have been the conſequence? Exactly what we ſee to be the conſequence in the Chriſtian World; where every true believer is thoroughly perſuaded, that God Almighty came from heaven; laid down, in his Goſpel, every thing neceſſary to be believed and practiſed, in order to bear things patiently here, and to be everlaſtingly happy hereafter. And are men the wiſer or the better? We muſt be thoroughly blinded by prejudice, and exceedingly ignorant of hiſtory, to ſay they are. Men are no more to be told what they muſt believe, and how they muſt act, than an inſtrument is to be told what harmony it is to afford. I do not mean to ſink a man into a level with any inſtrument; his thoughts and his actions, however, reſult from his conſtruction, as harmony does from that of an inſtrument. That conſtruction is good or evil, and will lead to virtue or vice,

vice, according as he has been originally formed by nature; according as he has been attempered in his childhood; according as he has been educated in his youth; and, according to the company and friends he has been connected with. This organization of the mind, (if I may ſo call it) or this moral conſtitution, is the true principle of human actions. When this is right; truly, or nobly, or delicately harmonized; virtues of a noble, or of an amiable, aſpect, and every ſpecies of genuine happineſs, will be the effects. When this is wrong; when it is defective, or diſarranged; the effect is vice: and no precepts; no inſtructions; no doctrines from heaven or hell—will make diſſonance harmony, darkneſs light, or vice to be virtue. Every degree of moral happineſs, reſults from a mind well-formed in ſome meaſure; and cannot be allotted, or given, as potentates give rewards to their favourites.

This matter is of great importance to every man, who wiſhes to make himſelf and others happy. Theſe conſiderations are offered to you, as worthy your ſerious and deliberate attention; not as ſubjects of cavil and animadverſion: and no man will uſe them as ſuch, who has not ſomething much the matter, either with his head or his heart.

But to return to the ſubject before us; in the proſecution of which it was neceſſary, that the real ſource and origin of virtue ſhould be pointed out; to aſſiſt us in comprehending the reaſons of thoſe philoſophical differences, which may give us trouble, when either thinking or reading on the ſubjects.

Differences

Differences of opinion, have been generally owing to the different nature of our imperfections. Virtue is the reſult of a proper arrangement, and a due exertion of our natural powers; and pleaſure is the conſequence. This pleaſure creates an intereſt; which, though it furniſhes a powerful ſecondary motive to the repetition of virtuous actions, is not, we ſee, the original ſpring; which is the moral organiſation, or moral conſtitution; and which naturally and neceſſarily produces its effects, either good or evil. This intereſt, if it could always be properly underſtood, might be apprehended to be the ſource of virtue, without much injury. But men are ſoon tired of general and comprehenſive views; and become influenced by particular paſſions. Thus, avarice, ambition, love, or ſome other paſſion, rules the mind, and determines its intereſt to one particular purſuit. A man who continues in that purſuit, at the expence of other obligations, is ſaid to be devoted to his intereſt; and he is diſregarded, or blamed, as vicious. In this manner, the word intereſt acquires a double meaning, and is liable to be miſtaken; on which account, it ſhould never be conſidered as a principle; which becomes uſeleſs, when ambiguous, or when it cannot admit of a clear and ſimple definition.

Perſons of a certain character will, however, adhere to this principle. The diſpoſition of their minds, leads them to apply the idea of intereſt to pleaſure, ambition, avarice, and even to the love of virtue. They contribute to the intereſt of other beings, with a view that other beings may contribute to theirs. In this manner, they have an intereſt in every thing around them;

them; and to be without this kind of intereſt, is to be without a motive, and without virtue. Theſe men become ſelfiſh, as they advance in years; and their error then appears, when grown mature, and it has aſſumed the perfect forms of avarice, or of miſanthropy.

Another claſs of men, more amiable in appearance, make virtue wholly ſocial. They ſay, it could not have exiſted out of ſociety; that benevolence is the principle out of which it ſprings; that this principle is innate; and the ſtrongeſt proof that we were born for ſociety. This is reaſoning in a circle, which conſiſts wholly of effects. None of our affections are properly innate. Benevolence is as much ſo as ſelf-love; and ſelf-love may as well be aſcribed to benevolence, as benevolence to ſelf-love. They may act together, and generally do: but they may act ſeparately, and even in oppoſition; and in all theſe caſes promote our happineſs. But it is as much owing to want of philoſophical accuracy, to bring them into competition, as to confound them. It is true, that we gratify ourſelves by good actions; and that we get rid of pain, when we relieve the objects of our compaſſion. It is true, alſo, that we may ſacrifice ourſelves for our friends; that a parent may give up his health, and gradually and deliberately wear out his life, in unſucceſsfully attempting to relieve his child. Theſe are all conſequences, and not firſt principles; they are the conſequences of a well-ordered and well-diſpoſed conſtitution, or mind.

I would wiſh you to attend to this matter, as of great importance, in adjuſting your own principles, in forming your children,

dren, and in procuring for yourſelves, and thoſe around you, all the happineſs you can enjoy. Imperfect as our knowledge, and corrupt as our morals may be, we ſee, that if men were to act according to the nature given them by God, univerſal goodneſs, and univerſal happineſs would take place. Man is born with capacities, which, if not injured and perverted, in their growth, by a bad education, or a bad government, would anſwer the intention of God; and every vice a man commits, may be referred to ſome error in forming or governing his mind. This is a reaſon, not only for attention to your children, but that you ſhould endeavour to underſtand the ſubject of education; at leaſt, ſo as not to ruin them. The ſevereſt ſatire that has been written on mankind, is that in which a philoſophical and eloquent author, gravely and methodically proves, that the next ſtage to the preſent circumſtances of humanity, is that of brutes; and that the beſt improvement which the preſent race of men can make in education, is, after the example of animals, to let their offspring run wildly, and receive impreſſions and informations at random. We muſt allow, with ſhame, that this, univerſally, would be an improvement on the ill-directed pains and ſolicitude of our preſent ſyſtem. It is thus, that ignorance, ſuperſtition and vice, ſink us even beneath the brutes. An animal, which is to live on ſtratagem, and who muſt have ſagacity ſuperior to her prey, does not leave her brood to chance, to be inſtructed in the buſineſs of life. Happily for her, ſhe cannot imitate man, in giving precepts inſtead of inſtructions. Every one of you, as well as I, have ſeen a common and contemned domeſtic animal, give more ſenſible and more effectual inſtructions to her young ones,

the great deſign of their exiſtence, than we have ever known a father give his children. We ſee, however, every day, the moſt convincing proofs, that errors in education are like errors in the firſt ſteps of a calculation; they multiply as we proceed; and they are abſolutely incurable, at certain periods. This is a diſcouraging and melancholy thought, to thoſe of us who are not children. I feel, myſelf, its utmoſt force; and I know I am condemned, like thouſands of my fellow-creatures, by a perverſe education, to ſee and lament failings, which no time, and no care, can ever remove.

A clear view of the origin of human virtue and happineſs, in a well-formed mind, would direct our attention, on all important occaſions, to the firſt ſource of a miſtake, or a vice. This would be an uſeful object of human enquiry and purſuit. There are aſſociations of men for folly and iniquity; there are aſſociations for the exerciſe of particular virtues; there are inſtitutions for adventitious knowledge; men have united to enquire into the nature and conſtitution of the world; and philoſophy is intent on the elements of the univerſe; there are numerous and magnificent appointments to make us happy in another world:—but none to make us good for any thing in this. All our proſpects are reverſionary ones; and we take care that our virtues ſhall be ſo likewiſe. There is no aſſociation, no inſtitution, in which the nature and conſtitution of man are the objects of attention and ſtudy; where the deſigns of God, in the human frame, are diſcovered, by repeated experiments on that frame itſelf; and where the firſt and fundamental principles of

philoſophy

philoſophy are exemplified, by exhibiting the fair and natural purpoſe of the human faculties. The firſt object of human induſtry, ſhould have been to have formed a rational and honeſt man:—all other branches of ſcience would have followed; and men would have made a much more reſpectable appearance than they do on the theatre of the world. We talk of virtue: we talk of politics; and we talk of ſcience. We are like actors on a ſtage, who force extraneous knowledge and extraneous paſſions on their minds, till they have deſtroyed their feelings. We ought to deſpiſe philoſophy, while philoſophers are deſpicable as men. How contemptible are political contentions and declamations on public virtue and public happineſs; while we cannot exhibit, to the contending diſputants, more deformed, or more frightful, devils, than their own intentions! How vain our complaints of domeſtic diſorder, want of attachment and fidelity in our connections; when men are univerſally and radically corrupted in their childhood and youth!——Clear the ſource, and all the ſtreams will be clear and delightful. Teach your children the right uſe of their natural faculties; make them act and ſpeak truly; train them in the occupations of reaſonable beings; and you will make your families happy; you will remove the miſeries of your neighbourhood: by removing the vices, you will remove the misfortunes of your country; for tyrants and oppreſſors fly at the approach of virtue, as demons are feigned to do at the approach of light—And, whatever may be the intentions of Supreme Wiſdom, with regard to us in another world, it is by virtue alone we can fulfil them.

LECTURE XVII.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF TRUTH.

Whatſoever things are true——

THERE has been hardly any ſubject of human enquiry, which has given men more pains and perplexity than truth. And yet the word is hourly in uſe. It is ſaid to be neceſſary to the happineſs of mankind. All philoſophical, and all religious, ſects, pretend it is the circumſtance which diſtinguiſhes them from the reſt of the world. The ſolemn expounders of the will of God, in all ages and in all nations, have aſſigned truth as the reaſon why the order of nature has been interrupted, and miracles wrought, in the execution of their ſeveral commiſſions. Numerous and divided as their ſucceſſors are, each of them avows his adherence to truth. The ſavage prieſt, who dips his hands in human gore; the gloomy inquiſitor, who gluts his eyes with the ſlow lingering torments of his fellow-creatures; the lazy uſeleſs dignitary, who forces the means of ſenſual gratification from the painful induſtry of his honeſt neighbours; the ſervile tool of power, whoſe thoughts always run in the channel pointed out for them, and who would trample his God to pleaſe his patron; the wild enthuſiaſt, who rants at decency, and reviles

viles even moral virtue; and the timid formaliſt, who is the ſlave of ſuperſtition, and multiplies his ceremonies, till he has no time for his duties—all theſe profeſs to be the ſervants of truth.——Some of them claim an excluſive right, and diſpoſe of it, as men do of a monopoly, at what prices they pleaſe. No commodity in trade has been ſo advantageous to its poſſeſſors, as this airy, unſubſtantial, changeable matter, which they affect to call truth. It has not only put it in their power to get poſſeſſion of the property of individuals; but it has given into their hands provinces, kingdoms, empires, and even the government of the world. Ancient Rome gradually aroſe from an unremitted exertion of courage, frugality, and public ſpirit. The ancient Romans paid the price of every advantage, and governed a world to which they were ſuperior in every virtue. The modern Romans acquired an empire as univerſal, more abſolute, and more advantageous, by this monopoly of pretended truth. They had the art to diffuſe a general opinion, that this myſterious commodity was in their poſſeſſion; that it operated like an univerſal charm, but that its operation was ſlow, and the effects of it were not to be diſcovered, till after this life. Mankind are reproached with being ſelfiſh, and too much attached to their preſent intereſts. Nothing can be more falſe. They have always been too little attached to their preſent intereſts; and have ſuffered deſigning hypocrites to take away bleſſings, which lay juſt before them; while they have been fooliſhly perſuaded to look at diſtant and deceitful proſpects. No fact in hiſtory can be more aſtoniſhing; nothing can ſhew in a ſtronger light, the advantage which diſhoneſt talents can have over honeſt

ignorance, than the univerſal and abſolute dominion, which the Church of Rome once exerciſed over the minds and properties of the whole world. This was, in fact, founded on an opinion, that truth was like a pearl, or a jewel, or a taliſmanic charm, in the poſſeſſion of an order of men, who could communicate it to thoſe whom they approved. The ſordid avarice, and boundleſs ambition, of this order, did not, for many years, open the eyes of the people. So great was their deluſion, and ſo great their folly, that they reſigned every valuable bleſſing of this life into the hands of their cruel maſters; and were content with promiſes, that they ſhould be happy in another. It coſt theſe deluders nothing, to deſcribe future poſſeſſions as immenſely valuable; and they ſaw, with triumph, the wretched people, deceived by their promiſes, ſtarved and naked; while they wallowed in riches, and were ſurfeited with intemperance, wholly at their expence.

On a proper conſideration of this ſubject, we may wonder at the miſapprehenſions and abuſes to which it has been liable. We ſhall ſee, that real truth, from the very nature of it, and the manner in which it is obtained, cannot poſſibly be the means of miſchief; and cannot be as a commodity, in the hands of one man, to give him power and advantage over another.

Truth is either a ſimple fact, ariſing immediately from obſervation and experience; or it is a propoſition, ariſing from the faithful and accurate obſervance of ſeveral facts, which have an effect on each other. The firſt ſimple facts, or truths, depend

on

on the excellence of our ſenſes; the laſt, which are principles and propoſitions, require not only a juſt and ſound ſenſibility, but a clear and vigorous underſtanding. All men are not happy in theſe reſpects; very few, perhaps, may be conſtituted as men ought to be: it may be ſaid, therefore, that very few are capable of feeling or diſcerning truly. Almighty God has ordered this matter, like all other thiugs of importance to the general happineſs, not only with equity and wiſdom, but with great mercy and goodneſs. The difference which may be given to our ſenſibility, by every poſſible cauſe, while it leaves us the denomination of men, and does not make us monſters or ideots, is never ſo great as to deſtroy our apprehenſions of truth and falſehood, in every thing neceſſary to our duty and happineſs. The circle of our obligations and our enjoyments contracts, in proportion to the imperfection of our ſenſes, and the weakneſs of our reaſon. But the various degrees of ſenſibility and underſtanding, which we obſerve among men, though they are the occaſions, are not the cauſes, of the errors and vices which infeſt the world.

Many ingenious philoſophers have had difficulties in defining truth; becauſe the apprehenſions of mankind concerning it, varied beyond their power of computation. Objects affect men differently, according as their organization is more or leſs juſt, vigorous, or delicate; and their concluſions, deductions and propoſitions, are, in ſome degrees, different, according to the complexion of their underſtandings. Truth, therefore, they ſay, varies according to the various apprehenſions, and judgments of

men. This is not an accurate and philoſophical manner of ſpeaking. Two perſons cannot look at any material object; a tree, for inſtance; without differing in their apprehenſions of its diſtance, ſize, and exact form; and this will be owing to ſome difference in the actual conſtruction of their eyes. Dr. Berkley, a philoſopher who has been ſcreened from ridicule, and treated with tenderneſs, on account of his virtue, rather than his underſtanding, denied the exiſtence of objects in the natural world, and of permanent principles in the moral. He ſaid, "that the tree, "which gave its image on our ſenſes, had no exiſtence, but "in that image; and as the image varied in ſhape, ſize, and "diſtance, according to the perſons who approached the tree, it "could be ſaid to have no real ſhape, ſize, or diſtance; and "therefore no exiſtence." By the ſame mode of reaſoning, if it may be called ſo, we may prove, that every ſubſtance which reflects a ſhadow, exiſts only in that reflection; and loſes its being, when thoſe cauſes ceaſe to act, which produce a ſhade from it: that a man, for inſtance, in a ſummer day, whoſe image is reflected by the ſun, on the graſs, is actually tall or ſhort, well or ill proportioned, according to the aſcenſion or declination of that luminary. There are now but few men who have adopted this viſionary ſyſtem; there never was a man who could act on it. I never myſelf could conſider it with ſerioufneſs; for when a man can talk of the exiſtence of images and effects from a tree or a horſe, and deny their exiſtence; that is, allow the effect and deny the cauſe, I ſhould think it loſt time to contend with him; for, by his own reaſoning, he has no exiſtence; he is only an idea, exiſting in nothing; which is the

idea of another idea, exiſting in an univerſal nothing; which is the idea of the univerſe. If this be not metaphyſical madneſs, it cannot be defined.——The advocates of this opinion, meanly ſhelter themſelves under the ſhadow of eſtabliſhed religions; and fly to received doctrines of immaterialiſm, and a world of ſpirits. Their purſuers have been tender of theſe doctrines, for prudent reaſons, in a material and ſenſible world. Here the immaterial philoſophers remain; and as their opinions have no influence on morals, we may leave them here with cloiſtered monks, dreaming of ſhadows; while we turn to the actual theatre of the world, where cauſes are, at leaſt, as real as their effects; and where things, be they called material or immaterial, body or ſpirit, make an actual impreſſion on the human ſenſes, and are the real foundation of experience and truth.

As a tree, or an animal, which may appear with ſome little difference to men, whoſe organs of ſight have different capacities, has an exiſtence independent of its effects, and would appear exactly of the ſame ſize, quality and diſtance, to any multitude of men, who were all exactly and perfectly formed: ſo the various cauſes which affect our ſenſibility, and give us facts; and the combination of them in propoſitions; would be exactly the ſame, in minds conſtructed on the firſt and perfect plan of nature. The variation in our ſenſibility, and in our judgment of facts and principles, is juſt like the variation in the outward appearance of objects; ſo little, that we all agree, not only in their exiſtence, but in their diſtance, ſhape, and quality. Thoſe

circumſtances are ſomething different, according to the difference of our organs; but the difference is ſo little as not to diverſify our judgments. Beſides, by experience, and by the uſe of reaſon on that experience, we find the occaſion in our defects, and not in the objects; we find the degree of our defects, and judge accurately of things, by allowing for them. Thus perſons of ſenſe and ingenuity, judge of outward objects by their effects on different ſenſes, not only nearly, but exactly alike. It would be ſo with facts and propoſitions, which conſtitute truth, if men were more improved in the general uſe of their ſenſes and underſtandings; and were as ſkilful in principles, as they are in the outward forms of animals and trees.

This matter is not merely ſpeculative and unimportant. Nothing can be more uſeful to us, than to have clear ideas of truth; and to be in poſſeſſion of ſome criteria, by which we may, in every thing of conſequence, diſtinguiſh between truth and falſehood. All men agree, that truth is the only ground of good conduct, and of religion; the only means of real knowledge and happineſs. They diſagree only in the nature and deſcription of it. It might ſeem ſtrange, to a perſon who would take things as they appear to be, that this diverſity and confuſion ſhould ariſe, on a ſubject, which, it might be expected, the Almighty would have left clear and without doubt. It is an evident law of nature, that every man ſhould think and act and ſpeak truth; and yet men are almoſt univerſally ſtrangers to it. There is no ſtation, or circumſtance, in which a perſon can be conceived; no duty he can fulfil; no uſe he can be of;

no

no credit he can acquire; and no happineſs he can enjoy—if he think and act and ſpeak falſely. And yet men are not only doubtful and uncertain, in the moſt general and important principles; but almoſt all their actions are deceit, and almoſt all their words are falſehood!—How can this be accounted for, while we ſuppoſe God intended us to think rightly, to act uprightly, and to ſpeak truth? The intentions of nature are obvious and clear in this matter; and the reaſons of human error may be eaſily ſhewn to thoſe who chuſe to attend to them.

No man can conſtruct a machine, ever ſo unimportant and trifling, without meaning that it ſhould anſwer ſome end; and without endeavouring that it ſhould have within itſelf the principles or means which might effect that end. This, if we may compare very ſmall matters with very great, ſeems evidently and univerſally the plan of nature. And if we ſuppoſe the univerſe under the direction of an intelligent Being; or even with the Atheiſt, ſuppoſe it under the law of neceſſity; the concluſion muſt be ſufficiently in our favour; for in the firſt caſe, a wiſe and good and powerful Being, would not cruelly form a creature with views of happineſs which he could not reach; and would not ſend a rational being into a world, where he was leſs capable of anſwering the end of his creation, than a clock or a watch to anſwer the end of its conſtruction. Even on the atheiſtic ſcheme, the concluſion is the ſame; for we ſee neceſſity acts throughout the univerſe with the ſame wiſdom, power, and tendency to what we call happineſs, as if it were ſome wiſe and powerful and good Being: and Neceſ-

ſity, and Chance are neceſſarily or accidentally uniform in their conduct, and neceſſarily or accidentally appoint ſufficient cauſes to produce effects. We may therefore, on the ſureſt poſſible ground of reaſoning, ſay, that man could not have been ſent into this world, without abilities to anſwer the ends of his exiſtence. We know this, in a more certain way, than from any method of reaſoning a priori. Experience, the beſt foundation of truth, aſſures us, in every trial we fairly make, that this is the caſe.

I need not ſtate to you the ends of our being; they all center in one end; which is pure and real happineſs. We have already ſeen, that virtue is the general and uniform exerciſe of all our faculties, to anſwer every poſſible and every excellent purpoſe of our exiſtence. Truth is the firſt direct effect of that exertion, whether in thinking, acting, or ſpeaking. To what uncertainty could this matter be liable, if men attended to their own experience, and meant only to anſwer the purpoſes of God? Truth is the firſt leſſon of virtue, and is founded on the early experience we make of what is pleaſant and what is painful, what is right and what is wrong. Our childhood and youth are the ſeaſons appointed by the Almighty for this experience; it is in the various proceſſes of this experience that we ſeparate truth from falſehood; and form thoſe principles of conduct which are to lead us through life. Theſe principles, if rightly formed, would not only be ſufficient, but they would infallibly and neceſſarily lead us to be good ſons and daughters; good brothers and ſiſters; affectionate huſbands and wives;

wives; tender fathers and mothers; faithful and uſeful friends; public-ſpirited members of ſociety; and the benevolent citizens of the whole world. All the truths neceſſary to the diſcharge of theſe obligations, ariſe immediately from the proper formation of the mind; from a fair experience of good and evil, right and wrong. What experience determines to be the intention of nature and leading to good is truth; what it determines to be out of the intention of nature, and leading to evil is falſehood. You ſee, therefore, that the Almighty has not only put it in every man's power to arrive at truth; but he has confined that power to himſelf; and no man can find out truth for him. The early experience of pleaſure and pain is the cauſe of our determination on truth and falſehood; and a man who can imagine that this experience can be made by another for him, and that the principles of truth and falſehood can be ſettled in his mind by the interpoſition and act of another, might as well imagine that another might eat and drink and ſee and hear for him. All truths neceſſary to our happineſs are thus, by the goodneſs, nay by the juſtice of Almighty God, put abſolutely in our own power: and nothing properly and ſtrictly deſerves the ſacred name of truth, but what ariſes from our own experience. Infinite wiſdom hath ſo ordered it, that the foundation of our happineſs ſhould be ſure, certain, and never ſubject to the will of others.

Things which are only acceſſaries, and which we may live without, are left to the report and teſtimony of others; and we may act on probabilities, where eſſential matters are not concerned.

cerned. Let us look into ourſelves for the great truths which are to make us happy. Let us liſten to the opinions of others; and read the works of moraliſts and hiſtorians, for our entertainment and amuſement only. The higheſt evidence which can ariſe from the teſtimony of others; from the reaſoning of moraliſts and divines; and the narrations of the beſt hiſtorians, amount only to probability; and God never intended we ſhould be guided by ſo precarious a principle as probability, in the great concern of our lives:——truth, real and certain truth, can be found only in our own minds.

LECTURE

LECTURE XVIII.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSCIENCE. PART I.

Τὸν ἐνδὸν ἄνθρωπον.

The inward man. MARC. ANTON.

My rejoicing is this——the teſtimony of my conſcience.

SCRIPT.

AS the view we have taken in theſe lectures of the faculties and duties of man has hitherto been only a general one; it may be proper that we ſhould conſider the general effects of virtue, before we enumerate its ſeveral branches, and point out each duty of life, with its reaſons and advantages.

Conſcience is a power of judging inſtantaneouſly of principles and actions; and this power is acquired by experience and reaſon. In order to obtain it, we muſt compare things with fidelity and accuracy, and poſſeſs clear ideas of truth and falſehood. Thoſe perſons, therefore, are miſtaken who ſpeak of conſcience as an original gift of nature. It is ſo far from being ſuch, that nothing is more uncommon than a juſt and ready ſentiment of right and wrong; or a clear and ſure conſcience. Even where Nature has given a capacity of this kind, a right

organiſation and ſenſibility; where it has given a power of acquiring reaſon and conſcience; the methods which are commonly taken in forming them, by comparing principles and actions, effectually pervert them. Some juſt and fair experience muſt generally be obtained from actions and their effects; and therefore all men have ſome degree of underſtanding, which they have agreed to call common ſenſe; and they have a general and indiſtinct ſenſe of right and wrong, which they call conſcience: but theſe powers are ſo feeble, ſo uncertain, ſo ill-defined, that there is no dependence on them.

Children, while they unavoidably acquire ſome underſtanding, and moral ſenſibility, by experience, have them much checked and injured by a learned, moral or religious credulity. The firſt years of their lives are employed in committing to memory the opinions of others, inſtead of attempting to form any of their own. This cuſtom generates in the mind a ſpurious principle, which is called by ſome wiſdom, by others learning; it is by no means that reaſon, that power of judging of every thing neceſſary to our improvement and happineſs, which is acquired only by actual experiment. This falſe wiſdom, though formed on the pureſt and nobleſt ſentiments of antiquity, is but a poor ſubſtitute to the genuine underſtanding of a man; as all imitations are wretched ſubſtitutes to nature. What muſt it be then? What muſt the ſpurious wiſdom and underſtanding of a youth be, who has the gradual and real proceſs of his nature ſuſpended; and the moſt important years of his life ſpent in learning the mean, ſervile, unmanly principles which are inſpired

ſpired by a modern faſhionable language, the object and end of a modern education.

Virtue is naturally aſſociated with pleaſure, and vice is naturally aſſociated with miſery. This is the leſſon of real knowledge and happineſs. On this alone the underſtanding and the heart are truly and properly formed. The method of anticipating this knowledge, by making children learned before they have underſtanding; even on the beſt models of Greece and Rome, is as unnatural and injurious, as the taſte of thoſe who force green fruits to appear in winter. Learned children and learned men are wonderful, it muſt be allowed, ſo are all unnatural things; ſo are fruits and herbs and trees, out of their proper ſeaſon; and they are all equally inſipid and uſeleſs, compared to the genuine and ſeaſonable productions of nature. What ſhall we ſay then of thoſe who are brought up on the lateſt plans; and whoſe minds are formed on ſentiments which are not even imitations of truth? When men are interrupted in the natural progreſs and growth of their underſtandings, they not only content themſelves with committing to memory what they ſhould learn by experience; but they aſſociate all kinds of ideas as they are directed. When the faſhion of education was univerſally to make men and women learned, by teaching them the manly ſentiments and languages of the Greeks and Romans—though it was painful to hear children utter the thoughts of a Socrates, a Plato, a Demoſthenes, or a Cicero; talk in a tone which could ſuit only long experience and great knowledge of men; ſpeak of the fate of nations,

when they had no conception of a community, but that wretched one, a ſchool; or to ſee them glow with public principles, ideas of public virtue and public happineſs, when the actual operations of their minds were wholly actuated by hunger, and the fear of that gloomy executioner, their ſchool-maſter:—this method, perverſe and unnatural as it was, could not totally ſtop the formation of the underſtanding. In the intervals of ſchool-buſineſs; in aſſociating with boys, and in ſome caſual intercourſe with the world, the mind caught at real information; and when reaſon was formed and looked back on what was ſtored in the memory, it was found ſo beautiful, ſo conſonant to nature, ſo truly the effect of experience, that it aſſiſted the underſtanding in forming itſelf; and man became truly wiſe, and truly a lover of virtue, by re-educating himſelf, and by comparing the experience of antiquity with his own. Here the uſe of learning might be diſcovered, and the proper ſeaſon of applying it. The experience of other men can be of no uſe to us, but when we are, or when we know we are to be, in ſimilar ſituations. It is very injudicious to oblige a man, in early youth, when he can have no knowledge, no learning, no love of his country or acquaintance with its laws, to be converſant only in the ſentiments of the patriots and legiſlators of antiquity. The writings of the ancients are, however, ſo fraught with genuine truths, which were in them the effect of experience, not of memory; that even a ſpurious underſtanding and virtue formed by reading them, have often appeared great and uſeful. The beſt characters of modern hiſtory have been, in this manner, copied from ancient maſters.

Every revolution favourable to the public liberty and happineſs of modern nations have been produced by the ſentiments of Greece and Rome reflected. What muſt wiſdom and virtue be in reality, when they are thus effectual and glorious in their images and ſhadows?

Theſe obſervations are made, not meerly with a view to right ſentiments of education; but to remove difficulties on the ſubject before us; and to account, in the caſes of men in general, for their having hardly any real underſtanding and conſcience, when it is evidently the intention of Providence, that they ſhould poſſeſs them in a great degree. We are often obliged to recur to education. It is the great ſource of all our misfortunes and all our evils. And when we are deſirous to know the cauſe of any of them, we ſhall hardly ever fail of finding it there. How is a man to be expected to have an underſtanding and a conſcience, who from childhood, till he enters on his partiular profeſſion, is excluded all rational ſociety; huddled with a number of other wretches into a community where there is no law, but the will of a callous and ſtupid tyrant; where there is nothing to intereſt but torture; and where his imagination is tranſported, not only out of his ſituation, family, and duties, but out of his country; and he converſes only with the experienced ſages, brave ſenators and warriors of Greece and Rome!——What is this abſurdity, cruel and ſhocking as it is, to the unmanly, wretched plans which form our preſent race of beings? where the ideas of happineſs and miſery which are by nature annexed to vice and virtue, are aſſociated with

with dreſs, with money, with birth; when the pernicious qualities of vanity, avarice, and pride, are forced on the minds of young people, with great pains and affiduity, ; and where a ſervile complaiſance; an infidious hypocriſy; and an intereſted credulity, are foſtered, as the principles of their future conduct! The conſcience of a child thus educated will approve of every thing which will procure him money, give him diſtinction, appearance, and conſequence.

The conſcience of a man is formed by time, experience, and habit; like his reaſon, imagination, and the other powers of his mind. A perſon who has been taught to conſider happineſs as the end of life, and to acquire real knowledge and virtue as the means of that happineſs, has a virtuous ſenſibility formed, which will ever direct him right; and will make him always happy. By a proceſs ſomething ſimilar, an infinite variety of falſe conſciences are formed. A man who has been taught to conſider intereſt as the end of life; and induſtry, attention, ſervility as means; makes his experiments and trials with that object in view; and his underſtanding and conſcience will be totally different from the former. In the one caſe, the natural ſenſibility is inſtantly alarmed, and the mind judges clearly of what leads to happineſs or miſery; in the other, the factitious conſcience is almoſt as ready in its determinations of what is beneficial or hurtful to a ſuppoſed intereſt. The latter ſeems to be the conſcience of modern times; for there is now ſuch a variety of opinions of right and wrong, as could not have taken place if moral happineſs or miſery were truly decided upon by conſcience.

conſcience. Theſe ever have been, and ever will be, the ſame in nature; and nearly the ſame in degree, where beings are formed ſo much alike as all men are. But their intereſts varying infinitely, they give riſe to that infinite variety of judgments in matters of right and wrong, which we ſometimes find ſurprizing, and difficult to be accounted for.

Vice would never be the deliberate choice and purſuit of a man, if his conſcience were truly and juſtly formed. The taſte of genuine moral happineſs is ſo ſeldom given us in youth, that it ſeldom or ever creates a ſufficient intereſt, to engage us to make a trial of virtue. Every man is deſtined to purſue his intereſt in ſome particular walk; and he is to warp his nature, and to accommodate his views, to what will promote or injure that intereſt. His underſtanding and his heart, of conſequence have a particular form, complexion and ſize given them. A man formed in the court of a prince, has a mind alert, attentive, penetrating and diſcerning, in an infinite multitude of little circumſtances; when employed in its own ſphere, it is ſo plauſible, that we often miſtake it for genius and fine underſtanding. His ſenſibility and conſcience are almoſt undefinable. For though actuated by the baſeſt and moſt determined ſelfiſhneſs, he ſeems to be affected by nothing as it regards himſelf. What has often been poetically ſaid of friendſhip and love, is realiſed in a courtier: he totally forgets himſelf; and ſees with the eyes, hears with the ears, and feels with the ſenſibility of his prince or his patron. The penetrating eye of an Addiſon has examined the head of a beau, and the heart of a coquet:

it would require the utmoſt efforts of a Shakeſpeare's genius, to give a clear view of the conſcience of a courtier. And yet this does its office, like a natural one, through life. It is the ready, inſtantaneous judge of right and wrong, expedient and inexpedient; and all the morality, religion, and happineſs of ſuch a man, are regulated by ſuch a conſcience.

If we attentively conſider men of other profeſſions, we find their conſciences vary, according to the difference of their views. The ſoldier's conſcience is his honour; and all morality and duty, all the feelings of a man and a citizen, are referred to this honour; which, to perſons in general, appears an ill-defined phantom; to him the only criterion of right and wrong. It may exiſt without knowledge, without truth; it may conſiſt with breach of faith in the tendereſt connections; it may ſuffer him to leave thoſe who have an affectionate dependence on him to profligacy or famine; he may be intemperate, debauched, a diſhoneſt fraudulent gambler: for his conſcience is not converſant in theſe things:—his heart tells him he is a man of honour. In all his duties, this principle is eminently his conſcience. If reading, converſation, and any of the unavoidable accidents of life, have awakened in him ſome of the feelings of nature; and he has obtained a partial judgment of the juſtice and humanity, which are due, not only from man to man, but from nation to nation; and which are the only foundations of private and public proſperity and happineſs—when honour calls, all theſe are trampled upon:—he murders, not only the man who reſiſts him in defence of the property which he has earned by his labour, and which is to be the ſuſtenance of a beloved family;

mily; but, like a ſavage wolf, enters the peaceful dwelling of the honeſt cottager; tears the ſmiling infant from the boſom of of its mother; and commits the laſt outrages on the inmoſt feelings of humanity. He yet can lay his hand on his heart, and find it replete with approbation:—for it is all in the path of honour. The time will ſurely come, when human nature will be more removed from its brutality than it is at preſent; when men's conſciences will be formed on the laws of nature, not on the barbarous prejudices of ſociety; and when thoſe heroes, whom we now celebrate, and whoſe ſole principle is a pretended honour, ſhall be either conſigned to an execrated oblivion, or be ranked with tigers and lions, by whoſe principles they have been actuated, and whoſe ravages they have imitated.

Religion, that firſt and beſt of bleſſings—has been miſinterpreted and miſunderſtood, ſo as to furniſh an infinite variety of falſe principles of conduct. The intent and purpoſe of it, is to lead men by virtue to happineſs. But there is no ſpecies of vice, which men have not committed, on one or more of thoſe falſe ſyſtems, which they have denominated true religion. The reaſon of this is obvious. A man is brought up to his religion as he is brought up to his trade. He is told of what articles and doctrines it is to conſiſt; and that if he does not induce his mind to believe and practiſe it, he will loſe the good opinion of his friends; he will make them his implacable enemies; his fortune will be injured; his perſon puniſhed; and after he has been tormented in this world, he will be conſigned over to the devil, who, it ſeems, is allied to theſe holy bigots,

and is to finiſh what they have begun, by making the poor wretch eternally miſerable. Thus are moſt religions taught; thus are the conſciences of men formed to every ſpecies of villainy and cruelty; and thus are they made, it is to be hoped, the moſt malignant and implacable fiends in the univerſe. It would take up volumes to deſcribe the calumny, fraud, perfidy, ſecret profligacy, the wars, devaſtations, and cruelties, which have been committed on religious principles; and all, not only with what was ſuppoſed a good conſcience, but with the higheſt triumph of pretended piety. The name of that Sacred Being, who gave exiſtence to the univerſe only to make it happy, is proſtituted by every ignorant and ſavage herd, who can injure and torment and plunder their fellow-creatures with impunity. Every bigot, from the ſtraggling follower of a field-preacher to the holy inquiſitor on his dark tribunal, is daily committing crimes againſt nature, religion and God, and with what he calls a good conſcience. The genuine principle of a bigot, is hatred of all his fellow-creatures, beyond the encloſures of his own party; his delight is in their ſufferings; and the moſt delicious moments of his life, ariſe from the perſuaſion that they will be precipitated by millions into hell, and endure endleſs and inexpreſſible miſeries. And yet this man not only imagines he has a good conſcience, but triumphs in its execrable teſtimony; and in proportion as he reſembles our idea of a fiend, he aſſures himſelf that he is becoming more after God's own heart.

If we deſcend into the common walks of life, and conſider the difference of men's apprehenſions on the ſubject of right and

wrong, we ſhall ſee that the ſatisfaction ariſing from the teſtimony of their conſciences muſt be extremely different. A ſcale might be formed on the cuſtoms and principles of trade and commerce, graduated from diſhoneſty and fraud, to the extreme points of honour and juſtice. Men's conſciences in their various employments are adjuſted on this kind of ſcale; and we may generally judge of the nature of a man's underſtanding, the elevation of his mind, and the delicacy and genuineneſs of his moral ſenſibility, from the nature of his employment. We ſee, therefore, that the conſcience which moſt of us poſſeſs, is not an original infallible guide, appointed by God in our breaſts. It is formed, as our other powers, by education, habits, examples, principles, and laws; and it differs greatly according as we have been differently affected by thoſe circumſtances. Thoſe only who have been educated on the principles of nature, early inſpired with the love of truth, and trained in the actual experience and practice of virtue, have a certainty of poſſeſſing a good conſcience.

LECTURE XIX.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSCIENCE. PART II.

Τὸν ἐνδὸν ἄνθρωπον.

The inward man. MARC. ANTON.

My rejoicing is this——the teſtimony of my conſcience.

SCRIPT.

WE have hitherto conſidered only ſome imitations of nature, which may be denominated ſpurious or falſe conſciences. They are materially different from thoſe which are commonly called bad conſciences. The former are ſubſtituted by injudicious management, inſtead of an approving and happy mind. They are produced, however, by ſimilar acts of the underſtanding, by ſimilar deductions from experience; and they become the ſteady, uniform teſts and judges of right and wrong. This is the reaſon of that variety in the conduct of men, who ſeem to intend well; to have a reference to a common ſtandard of good and evil; and who mean to judge honeſtly of right and wrong. This is the reaſon that thoſe who profeſs religions which have tendencies, not only different but oppoſite to each other, are all equally confident of the

the favour of God; and equally certain that they are holy and virtuous. This is the reaſon why men act habitually and conſtantly, not only in oppoſition to nature and reaſon; but to the principles which they avow; and can reconcile, in their faith and conduct, ſuch contradictions as benevolence and cruelty, juſtice and fraud, piety and blaſphemy. This is alſo the reaſon that in all the profeſſions and occupations of life, men of the ſame religion, of the ſame moral opinions, and of ſimilar conſtitutions and diſpoſitions of nature, act on different and contradictory plans, and are at variance with each other; when it is the general intereſt and intention that they ſhould be agreed and united. Almoſt every ſpecies of uncharitableneſs may be accounted for, from this doctrine of falſe conſciences. The contempt and obloquy which are caſt on one occupation, or one profeſſion, by another, are owing to this univerſal deception. Men judge of others according as their principles and conduct agree or diſagree, with the laws of nature; they determine on themſelves, at leaſt on their general occupation, by that ſenſe of right and wrong which education and cuſtom have adapted to that occupation. In this manner, religious ſects have worried and tormented and damned each other; calumny, ſpite, malice, and cruelty, have laid waſte the earth in the name of the Lord: and what was univerſally acknowledged to derive its excellence from the deſign of bringing "peace on earth, and good-will to-"wards men," has been more at enmity with human happineſs, and occaſioned more villainy and miſery, than any other circumſtance in the annals of the world. Every ſect has its particular portion of truth and falſehood, good and evil, on which

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the conſciences of its votaries are exactly formed; and a ſavage zealot would tear out, with his teeth, the heart of a man who differed from him, with the ſame aſſent of conſcience, as a calmer and more deliberate bigot would ruin his character, or deſtroy his domeſtic peace. All theſe men are fully perſuaded in their own minds, though they act in oppoſition to every law of God and Nature, and are at war with every thing valuable in the world. There is no remedy in this matter. A man, when once degenerated into a bigot, is incurable. Knowledge, the univerſal remedy of all moral diſorders, he cannot acquire; for he has not modeſty enough to ſuppoſe he wants it. It is the knowledge of man alone, and of the method of forming his habits and principles, that can either prevent us from being conducted by ſpurious conſciences; prevent us from being bigots; or reſtore us, when we have had that misfortune. Were it poſſible for all theſe deluded wretches, of every denomination and of every profeſſion, to ſee each other in the light they appear to a real philoſopher; running in infinite directions from the plain paths of goodneſs; contending with each other without a motive; and deſtroying each other without advantage: if they could trace the origin of their ſeveral principles, the formation of their conſciences, and the difference of their views—how humiliating would the proſpect be; and with what haſte would they recur to the obvious and univerſal leſſons of nature; where there can be no poſſibility of a difference which can occaſion miſchief; and where there is but one clear and certain rule of right and wrong, virtue and vice, leading directly to happineſs and miſery!

This

This may ſuffice to point out falſe and ſpurious conſciences, which in men are ſteady and conſtant principles of action; and which, when they are formed with care, on ſome political, moral, or religious prepoſſeſſions, are incurable ſources of ill. They are like many diſorders in the animal œconomy, where the patient is inſenſible of his danger; where temporary and fallacious gratifications render him ſecure and ſatisfied; and where no remedies can be applied; becauſe his own concurrence, and his own endeavours are requiſite; and he cannot ſee the neceſſity of them.

It is to be hoped no perſon will be ſo puerile as to ſay, that if men think themſelves right, they muſt be ſo; and the utmoſt that can be expected of them is to act on their opinions. It may be a deſirable matter, that men ſhould proceed thus far in the path of morality, and act ſincerely and honeſtly on thoſe principles which they profeſs, whether good or evil. Hypocriſy, added to ignorance and vicious principles, increaſes the miſchief of them; and yet we find it generally attending them. Men have not only falſe ideas and falſe conſciences given them, but they are alſo taught to wear maſques, whenever they think fit to act contrary even to their wretched principles. If we remove this hypocriſy, it is true we remove an evil—Would to God it were removed!—We ſhould then only have errors to encounter with, which might be either prevented by a rational and juſt education, or by a diligent and careful attention to the nature and happineſs of man. Perſons ill-educated, ill-informed, and with falſe and deluſive conſciences, are, however, in a much

worſe

worſe ſtate than common and flagrant ſinners, whoſe actions are in oppoſition to their minds, and who are often reſtored to virtue, by experiencing the miſeries of vice. It is not uncommon to ſee thoſe who have been led into exceſſes by their paſſions recover themſelves, and become regular and happy. It is very uncommon to ſee a man in any profeſſion acting above the prepoſſeſſions of it. It is very uncommon to ſee a charitable ſectary, or a perſon who has had his mind formed on narrow gloomy cruelty, recover any degree of liberality, good-nature, and humanity. Men in this ſituation are like lunatics, the main ſpring of whoſe minds is a falſe and inſufficient one. And we might as well ſay, that lunatics are as they ought to be, becauſe they think ſo; as that men who act ill on religious or political principles are right, becauſe they are of that opinion. The proper and real happineſs of man, as an individual, as a member of ſociety, and a part of the univerſal empire of God, is to be procured only by real knowledge and virtue. It is, therefore, as much our duty, in every caſe, to conſider and examine our principles; as it is honeſtly to act on them, when we are ſatisfied they are right.

It may be imagined, that an opening is here made for intemperate zeal and contention on account of principles. It is the importance of knowledge and right belief, which has been the general pretence of intolerance and perſecution. The care and induſtry which we ſhould exerciſe in examining our principles, would lead to candour and toleration, and never to bigotry and perſecution. Every man would be properly and fully employed

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on himſelf; and would have no time or motive to moleſt and injure another, under the pretence of ſerving and ſetting him right.——Every degree of knowledge, virtue, and happineſs, which we can enjoy, muſt be the produce of our own minds. They admit of infinite modifications and degrees, and are ſubject to no regulations and laws, but thoſe only of nature and God.

I have enlarged the more on this part of the ſubject, which relates to pretended conſciences; not only becauſe it is important; but becauſe I do not know that it has been conſidered by any moraliſt or divine. I have inveſtigated the truth with attention and care; if I have been miſtaken in any thing, thoſe who are capable of ſeeing it will forgive me; if I ſhould be miſunderſtood, thoſe who have the intereſt of truth and virtue at heart, will heſitate ere they miſrepreſent me.

We now come on more frequented and leſs difficult ground—to conſider the method of forming and the miſery of enduring a bad conſcience. On this part of the ſubject, thouſands have written and ſpoken with truth and effect. But the firſt in genius and real penetration is our immortal Shakeſpeare; and I cannot better employ a few minutes of your time, and more uſefully illuſtrate the particular point I have here in view, than by placing before you one of his characters. This may be beneficial to you in various ways; not only as it may now furniſh you with a moral leſſon, but as it may lead you into a method of making even your entertainments and pleaſures uſeful to your morals.

The human imagination never drew after nature a more maſterly character than that of Macbeth; to illuſtrate which, it is neceſſary to obſerve one thing, of great importance in conſidering the productions of poetry:—that poetic machinery, the introduction of Gods, ſpirits, and goblins, are, in real poets who derive their great principles from nature, only allegories of prejudices, paſſions and human opinions; and that, in general, nothing is attributed to the former, but may be produced by the latter. In feeble and pretended poets it is different; for they have recourſe, to ſupernatural means, to get themſelves out of abſurd and unnatural ſituations. Shakeſpeare, whoſe eye ſeems to have glanced into all the receſſes of the human heart, firſt gives the outline of his hero; brave, noble, ambitious, with a mind formed on the looſe incorrect plan of our ancient nobility. His principle, the love of glory; and the means, deeds of valour and courage. Nature ſeems to have given him a conſtitution ſuſceptible of the beſt impreſſions; but they ſerved only to reſtrain and to torment him. He was formed, like all the nobles of his time, to make every ſentiment of nature coincide with the general love of glory. In this, all perſonal conſiderations; all regard to private virtues; and all the juſtice and humanity due from clan to clan, or nation to nation, were loſt; and he, like all his cotemporaries, felt no reluctance in thoſe devaſtations, which the cuſtoms and laws of the times reckoned harmleſs or meritorious. This we are made to underſtand as his general character; when a formidable rebellion aroſe, and his valour and power were exerted to the utmoſt to deliver his country. On his return from this uſeful and glori-

ous expedition, his mind, elated and intoxicated with ſucceſs, points out to him the throne, as the proper object of his ambition, then filled by an aged and unwarlike prince. The art of the poet is here admirable; for he refers to bad ſpirits the the ſuggeſtions of bad paſſions. He deſcribes him on a heath, a proper ſcene for recollection; where theſe ſpirits preſent themſelves; and where the events which befell him are prognoſticated, exactly as they are uſually prognoſticated by the imagination and paſſions, diveſted of their conſequences and wretchedneſs.

> Say, from whence you owe this ſtrange intelligence? or why,
> Upon this blaſted heath, you ſtop our way
> With ſuch prophetic greeting?

When the meſſengers from the king hail him with the honours, which ſtood between him and the throne; and which his ambition had coveted; or, as the poet ſays, the witches had promiſed him; his mind immediately graſps at royalty; but his conſcience is not reconciled to the means of obtaining it.

> Two truths are told,
> As happy prologues to the ſwelling act
> Of the imperial theme———
> This ſupernatural ſoliciting
> Cannot be ill; cannot be good: if ill,
> Why hath it given me earneſt of ſucceſs,
> Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
> If good, why do I yield to that ſuggeſtion,

Whoſe horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my ſeated heart knock at my ribs,
Againſt the uſe of nature? Preſent fears
Are leſs than horrible imaginings:
My thought, whoſe murther yet is but fantaſtical,
Shakes ſo my ſingle ſtate of man, that function
Is ſmother'd in ſurmiſe; and nothing is,
But what is not———
If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me,
Without my ſtir——

The gradual leſſening of his irreſolution, and reluctance to commit the crimes neceſſary to his elevation, is exactly after nature. For when he comes into the royal preſence, he ſees in the Prince the firſt obſtacle to be removed; and his reſolution aſſumes a degree of firmneſs.

The Prince of Cumberland!—that is a ſtep
On which I muſt fall down, or elſe o'erleap;
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires,
Let not light ſee my black and deep deſires:
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to ſee.

The ſtate of mind he is in, when worked up to the reſolution of killing the King, is expreſſed in a paſſage, which every man ſhould learn as a leſſon, to guard him againſt the exceſſes of violent paſſions.

If

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly:—If the aſſaſſination
Could trammel up the conſequence, and catch,
With his ſurceaſe, ſucceſs: that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here; upon this bank and ſhoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in theſe caſes,
We ſtill have judgment here, that we but teach
Bloody inſtructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed juſtice
Commends the ingredience of our poiſoned chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double truſt;
Firſt, as I am his kinſman and his ſubject,
Strong both againſt the deed; then as his hoſt,
Who ſhould againſt his murtherer ſhut the door,
Not bear the knife myſelf. Beſides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties ſo meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongue'd, againſt
The deep damnation of his taking off:
And Pity, like a naked new-born babe
Striding the blaſt, or Heaven's cherubin, hors'd
Upon the ſightleſs couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears ſhall drown the wind. I have no ſpur
To prick the ſides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itſelf,
And falls on the other.——

When he is on the point of committing the crime, the poet ſhews the higheſt knowledge of human nature, in diſturbing his

his imagination with a dagger in the air, moving toward the horrid ſcene.

Is this a dagger, which I ſee before me?
The handle towards my hand? Come, let me clutch thee—
I have thee not; and yet I ſee thee ſtill.
Art thou not, fatal viſion, as ſenſible
To feeling as to ſight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind; a falſe creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppreſſed brain?
I ſee thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which I now draw.
Thou marſhal'ſt me the way that I was going;
And ſuch an inſtrument I was to uſe.
Mine eyes are made the fools of the other ſenſes,
Or elſe worth all the reſt—I ſee thee ſtill;
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not ſo before.—There's no ſuch thing;
It is the bloody buſineſs which informs
Thus to mine eyes.—Now, o'er half the world
Nature ſeems dead, and wicked dreams
Abuſe the curtain'd ſleep: now witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd Murther,
Alarum'd by his centinel the wolf,
Whoſe howl's his watch, thus with his ſtealthy pace,
With Tarquin's raviſhing ſtrides, towards his deſign,
Moves like a ghoſt.—Thou ſure and firm-ſet earth,
Hear not my ſteps, which way they walk; for fear
The very ſtones prate of my whereabout,
And take the preſent horror from the time
Which now ſuits with it.——

After

After the dreadful deed has been committed, the converſation between him and his Lady, is expreſſive of all the horror and miſery which can ariſe from a conſciouſneſs of guilt.

Methought I heard a voice cry, Sleep no more!
Macbeth doth murder ſleep, the innocent ſleep;
Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd ſleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, ſore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's ſecond courſe,
Chief nouriſher of life's feaſt;—
—Still it cried—Sleep no more!—to all the houſe:
Glamis hath murther'd ſleep; and therefore Cawdor
Shall ſleep no more: Macbeth ſhall ſleep no more.

After he has waded in iniquity, his reſolutions to proceed are thus admirably expreſſed.

We have ſcotch'd the ſnake, not kill'd it;
She'll cloſe, and be herſelf; whilſt our poor malice
Remains in danger of her former tooth.
But let the frame of things disjoint, both worlds ſuffer,
Ere we'll eat our meal in fear, and ſleep
In the affliction of theſe terrible dreams
That ſhake us nightly. Better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our place, have ſent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In endleſs ecſtacy.——

When he has murdered his friend Banquo, and his conſcience conjures up his ghoſt before him, he ſays,

If

If I ſtand here, I ſaw him!

LADY MACBETH. ——Fie, for ſhame!

MACBETH. ——Blood hath been ſhed ere now, i' the olden time,
Ere human ſtatute purg'd the general weal;
Ay, and ſince too, murthers have been performed,
Too terrible for the ear: the times have been,
That when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end; but now they riſe again,
With twenty mortal murthers on their crowns,
And puſh us from our ſtools.

His natural courage, and the force and power of his conſcience, are finely expreſſed in the following lines.

What man dare, I dare:
Approach thou like a rugged Ruſſian bear,
The armed rhinoceros, or th' Hyrcanian tyger,
Take any ſhape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble: or be alive again,
And dare me to the deſert with thy ſword:
If trembling I inhibit then, proteſt me
The baby of a girl.—Horrible ſhadow!
Unreal mockery! hence!—Why, ſo, being gone,
I am a man again.——

When the young Princes come to take vengeance on him, and every thing wears the appearance of diſtreſs; he, like moſt guilty men, has recourſe to ſuperſtition; and holds before him, as his ſecurity, the prophecies of the weird ſiſters: and when theſe fail him—the laſt ſtate of guilty horror ſucceeds.——

I've

I've almoſt forgot the taſte of fears;
The time has been, my ſenſes would have cooled
To hear a night-ſhriek; and my fell hair
Would at a diſmal treatiſe rouſe, and ſtir,
As life were in't: I have ſupp'd full with horrors;
Direneſs, familiar to my ſlaught'rous thoughts,
Cannot once ſtart me.

When this deſperate fury ſubſides, he dies like a miſerable daſtardly wretch—an everlaſting leſſon to thoſe who ſuffer themſelves to be led by any paſſion againſt the ſentiments of nature, the concluſions of reaſon, and the laws of God.

LECTURE XX.

Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for thoſe that love him. SCRIPT.

THE commentators of the New Teſtament have not yet agreed, whether theſe words are to be applied to a happy ſtate in what they call the kingdom of God in this world, or to the happineſs which is reſerved for all true believers in heaven. The words anſwer ſo well to my ideas of the pleaſures of a good conſcience; which muſt be the happineſs of a moral and reaſonable being, whether he be within the pale of the viſible church, or without it, and whether he be an inhabitant of heaven or of earth, that I ſhall prefix them, as a motto or a text, to the preſent lecture.

The world is ſo replete with ignorance and vice; men are ſo perverted by bad cuſtoms, bad governments, and bad religions, that we may truly and literally affirm, that eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man

to

to conceive, the genuine pleaſures of a well-informed and virtuous conſcience.

This is the happineſs which men have been ever ſeeking, under various forms, and by an infinite variety of means. The diſtance at which ignorance and vice have left us from this ultimate object of univerſal purſuit; the diſagreement and oppoſition in our opinions, as to the nature of the object; and the means of obtaining it; have made ſome philoſophers doubt the poſſibility of an uniform and univerſal ſtate of moral rectitude and happineſs, ſuited to the formation and faculties of man. That men are neither wiſe, nor virtuous, nor happy, is a fact which cannot be diſputed; that they have never been ſo, in very high degrees, appears by all authentic hiſtory to be a fact; and it does not ſeem likely that they ever will become ſo, till the effect of every ſpecies of ignorance and vice has been tried, and the miſeries occaſioned by them have been felt, and recorded in the events of human ſociety. We ſeem to be in the ſtate of ſome machines, whoſe original proportions, arrangements, and principles are juſt, right, and calculated perfectly to anſwer their purpoſes; but from want of ſkill and experience in thoſe who firſt direct their operations, are liable to errors, become uncertain in their movements, and miſlead and injure, inſtead of being uſeful and beneficial. Man is ſent into the world as he ought to be; but he is injured and perverted by thoſe who have the care of him; corrupt ſocieties place before him motives which miſlead him; and the uſe and fair reſult of his powers are never ſeen. This is the certain origin of vice and miſery; con-

cerning which there has been ſo much metaphyſical inveſtigation and enquiry. Men are ignorant; and therefore vicious; and therefore miſerable. Their efforts in forming ſocieties, and in marking out the path which a reaſonable creature is to take, have been generally injudicious, often injurious. Inſtead of being aſſiſted, in the way to happineſs, by the firſt circumſtances that attend them in life, they are impeded, and are ſometimes put under a moral neceſſity of becoming miſerable.

But it may be ſaid——Should not the conſtitution of things have been otherwiſe? Should not men have been formed with ſuch capacities as to ſecure them from error and miſery? Should not that happineſs, which you are holding up before us as unattainable by human imperfection and error, have been put within the reach of every man? And would it not have been more worthy of Divine Goodneſs, to have made the world the abode of knowledge, than to have made it, as it ſeems to be, a vale of tears; a dark ſcene of blundering trials and miſtakes; where our road is embarraſſed by briars and thorns; and where we hear nothing but the ſhrieks of the oppreſſed, and the groans of the miſerable?

This has been a difficulty in the way of all moraliſts; becauſe they have been afraid to venture far enough into the argument. Hardly any philoſopher has been able to keep his mind free from ſome confuſed reproach of the Divine Goodneſs; and, to remove it, one man has had recourſe to a pre-exiſtent ſtate, and a tranſmigration of ſouls, with their failings and ſins; and another

another to a future ſtate, where the errors and miſtakes of this will be rectified. Theſe things may have amuſed children and childiſh perſons, or afforded materials for poems and fables; but they have never yielded one ingredient of real truth and ſolid happineſs to a genuine and manly mind. What is it to us, that men have been more ignorant and wretched in a former ſtate than we are now? Or, if we ourſelves have inhabited other bodies, where we have committed enormities for which we now ſuffer, how does this account for the Divine Goodneſs, in putting us originally into thoſe bodies where our ſins were committed?—In the doctrine of a future ſtate, this matter ſeems to be better removed; but it is not in fact; and the deluſion, as it is more plauſible, is more pernicious. The advocates of this doctrine, who are very numerous; all the diſciples of Moſes, of Confucius, of Brama, of Socrates, of Chriſt, and of Mahomet, are agreed to give up the point of juſtifying the ways of God to man here; and they point out heaven, where all matters are to be cleared up. They are in the ſtate of thoſe ſpendthrifts, who have not ability or reſolution to look into the real cauſes of their difficulties, and direct their hopes to a futurity which will adjuſt every thing for them. If all men were uniformly to act on this principle of referring juſtice and equity to futurity; which, by the way, they take care not to do—the world would ſoon find the matter to be decided in a kind of Hell, and not in any Elyſium; they would be forced to examine and remove the immediate cauſes of their miſery, by a very different ſcene from what they repreſent Heaven to be. You will pleaſe to obſerve, that I am not now conſidering the doc-

trine of a future ſtate, whether it be true or falſe, probable or improbable. When the ſubject comes before me in its proper order and place, I will treat it with all the ability and knowledge I poſſeſs; and ſpeak my thoughts as freely and plainly as I do on all other ſubjects. Here my deſign is to ſhew, that thoſe philoſophers and divines, who were obliged to fly to a future ſtate, to obtain general and indiſtinct reaſons for the events of this, were not able defenders of the real cauſe of God and nature.

We ſhall ſee this, if we conſider what they promiſe in futurity—an exemption from miſeries, and the enjoyment of uninterrupted happineſs.——How!—in what manner are they to be procured?—By an act of Divine Power. This is a matter which it is impoſſible we ſhould comprehend. If an angel from heaven were commiſſioned to give us information of this kind, it would not ſignify; becauſe we could not underſtand him. We have no ideas of Divine Power, but thoſe we derive from the works of God. When we get out of the province of experience and obſervation on thoſe works, we get out of the limits of truth; and we may amuſe ourſelves and others with probabilities and poſſibilities——it will be a thouſand to one that all the poſitions we form are untrue and fallacious. There is nothing we know of in all nature, analogous to the idea of conferring moral happineſs by power. To ſay, it is not probable; it is not, according to our ideas, poſſible, that the Deity ſhould make us happy in heaven by a ſimple act of power—is only, in other words, to ſay, it is not poſſible for the Deity to act

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in an abſurd, unnatural, unreaſonable manner. What is, therefore, alledged of the almighty power of God, that every thing is poſſible with him, is only the ſublime jargon of men, who have been miſled into difficulties and abſurdities in their pretended reaſonings; and have a general way of getting clear of them, by charging them to ſomething undefinable and unknown in the Deity. You are not to imagine I ſpeak impiouſly or irreverently of the Supreme Mind. It is from the profoundeſt reverence that I am obliged thus to ſpeak. I would as ſoon charge the Deity with evil and immoral qualities, as with abſurdities; and thoſe who ſay he is a tyrant, haughty, arbitrary, and cruel, are not much more guilty, than thoſe who ſay he will do things, even for the virtuous, which are contrary to nature, truth, reaſon; or, according to all our ideas, impoſſible.

It is true, that it may ſeem preſumptuous to aſſert, in any caſe, what is, or what is not, impoſſible to God. It is a ſubject on which men ought never to ſpeak or to write; for they muſt run into nonſenſe and blaſphemy. The great book of nature is open for our inveſtigation; and the truths it contains would employ us for ever. Theſe are the things which he hath made. What further works he may perform, whether on the ſame principles with the preſent, whether on different ones—it will be time enough for us to enquire, when we have diſcovered all that is to be known, and done the duties we have to do here. Thoſe who neglect that knowledge and thoſe duties, to talk of probabilities and poſſibilities in the intentions of God, quit the road of truth and happineſs, for that of error, abſurdity, blaſphemy,

phemy, and every kind of immorality. The productions of nature, in the heavens, the earth, the ſea, the air, are replete with facts which lead to concluſions favourable to the happineſs of mankind. Thoſe who underſtand the real ſtate of this knowledge, need not be told, that the proficiency made in it is inconſiderable, in proportion to its extent and importance. But man, who purſues this knowledge, is the higheſt and moſt important object of his own contemplation. Every ſtep he takes; every action he performs; every effect produced on him; the ſlighteſt impreſſion made on his conſtitution; are all matters of attention: for by them his happineſs or miſery are produced; nay, by them many of the powers and principles are formed, by which he purſues and feels them. If, therefore, the conſtitution of human nature be ſuch, that it may acquire all neceſſary and real knowledge; if a real knowledge of man; of his ſituation, powers, and relations; of the juſt and fair effects of his thoughts, principles, and actions; would infallibly make him virtuous, and that infallibly make him happy;—what occaſion have we to go out of this world for reaſons to juſtify God here?——It is probable; nay, it is certain, there are other worlds; where, no doubt, he is amply glorified by all their intelligent and virtuous inhabitants. And why not here?—Did his wiſdom, or did his goodneſs deſert him, when he made us? And are we ſo ſunk in the ſcale of being, that while every atom around us is active in fulfilling his deſigns, we have not underſtanding and knowledge enough to juſtify him on the very ſpot where we ſtand?—There is not a receſs through univerſal nature, where God is not praiſed, unleſs

leſs it be in vicious minds; and thoſe minds cannot be benefited by change of ſituations. An ignorant or perverted man would find himſelf as unhappy in heaven as he does on earth; and juſt as much at a loſs for reaſons to defend the character of the Almighty from reproach and miſrepreſentation.

We have already endeavoured to throw ſome light on that very important ſubject, the nature of man. We have ſhewn how all his real knowledge is acquired; how his ſenſibility, underſtanding, and his moral principles are formed; and that virtue is the general and uniform exertion of them. All theſe things, in the education and formation of a reaſonable being, are carried on according to laws as certain, and invariable, as thoſe by which graſs and flowers and trees are made to grow. And as, in common nature, where the laws of it have their effect, beauty and uſe are the certain conſequences; ſo in what may be called the rational and moral world, where all the natural powers are properly formed, duly adjuſted, and diligently uſed; happineſs is the certain and infallible conſequence.

While that experience is made, which produces knowledge and virtue; a reflective power is acquired, which determines on all our principles and actions. This power adminiſters to us all the moral pleaſure and pain we are capable of; and nothing in heaven or earth can interfere with it. In proportion as our minds have been formed on the intentions of nature, in proportion as we think and intend and act rightly——we enjoy the pleaſures of a good conſcience.

But our knowledge is ſo wretchedly acquired; our minds ſo miſguided and perverted; and our judgments ſo feeble and precarious; that we may ſay, eye hath not yet ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of the pleaſures of a good conſcience. It is in vain, therefore, to talk of general effects, of which we cannot judge. We ſhall deſcend to particular duties; which, while they contribute to this great, inexpreſſible, unattainable happineſs, the uniform and intire approbation of an intelligent and virtuous mind; have diſtinct pleaſures, which they immediately confer on thoſe who perform them, even while unattended with all the other virtues. As perfect melody can be produced only by an inſtrument whoſe parts co-operate and harmonize with each other; ſo perfect moral happineſs is the effect only of a mind, all whoſe faculties have been formed on the laws of nature; all whoſe principles coincide and harmonize in acts of virtue.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXI.

TRUTH.

The lip of truth ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever.

BEFORE we enter on the particular duties ariſing from our nature and ſituation, and which are neceſſary to happineſs, it may be proper to explain ſome terms and phraſes, which are liable to miſinterpretation, have occaſioned diſputes, and furniſhed artful men with plauſible reaſons for miſleading others, or neglecting their own duties. If the partial and temporary intereſts of mankind were never at variance with truth, there would be no occaſion for this precaution. But there is hardly any kind of error, while it miſleads and injures one part of the world, which is not laid hold of by another, for ſome profit or advantage. The ſtate of men has ever been ſuch, that thoſe who wiſhed to lead them into the paths of knowledge and virtue, in order to render them happy, have been at a loſs for a plain, external ſtandard of right and wrong, to which they might directly refer the groſſeſt and moſt uninformed underſtandings. The truth is, that there can be no ſuch ſtandard. Knowledge is the very foundation, on which every degree of moral virtue and happineſs reſts;

and all the expedients which have been contrived to ſave the trouble of acquiring it; all the teſts of good and evil, which have been held before the minds of men who were to remain in ignorance, are fallacious and hurtful. The laws of nature, in regard to morals, are as certain and invariable, as thoſe in regard to common matter and motion. We might as reaſonably expect to reap where we have not ſown, as to become virtuous without knowledge. Morality, therefore, is not to be taught by leſſons, principles, and doctrines; it grows, like fruit on a tree, out of that kind of underſtanding and diſpoſition, which nature and education have given us. This is the reaſon that men, who have been perverted while the habits and diſpoſitions of their minds were forming, exhibit abſurd contradictions in their characters; do ill, while they talk well; deſire happineſs, while they are continually projecting and acting to render themſelves miſerable.

Theſe difficulties have been ever felt and underſtood; and many ſteps have been taken to remove them. The general laws of nature, in regard to morals, have been inveſtigated; and ſyſtems have been formed and laid before mankind. Such principles and actions, they are told, will lead to happineſs; and ſuch principles and actions to miſery, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. This cannot avail, or help greatly to make them virtuous, if the bias originally given their minds be towards vice. The beſt effect it can have, muſt be on the care of their offſpring, if they have penetration enough to find out the cauſes of their own evils.

Thoſe philoſophers who have diſapproved of moral and religious ſyſtems, have referred men to nature, as furniſhing all the real reaſons and motives of a good conduct. Their principle is, that a ſtate of nature is a ſtate of virtue; and that men owe their miſeries to their deviations from it. But it may be ſaid, "Where is this ſtate of nature, that we may enter into it? "We ſeek only happineſs; and whether the ſtate in which it "may be found, be called a ſtate of nature or a ſtate of grace, "it cannot ſignify to us." The difficulties attending the ſolution of this queſtion, have involved perſons of the beſt underſtandings and the beſt intentions in errors of great importance: one of which is to diſtinguiſh a ſtate of nature from a ſtate of ſociety, and to ſeparate the region of their ſpeculations and reaſonings, from that in which men are actually ſituated, and in which they can be affected When they talk of a ſtate of nature, they talk of an ideal one, in which no man ever exiſted; and in which it is impoſſible he ſhould exiſt, and become either virtuous or happy. They have imagined children left on deſert iſlands, where the prejudices and temptations of ſociety could not miſlead them; but they have always taken poetic licence, in furniſhing them with underſtandings and affections which it muſt have been impoſſible they ſhould have poſſeſſed. The ſtate in which they have placed them, is the furtheſt from nature which can well be imagined; and a creature in human ſhape who ſhould have his mind formed where there were only trees, rocks, and brutes, would be a monſter, and not a man.

Others,

Others, ſeeing the difficulties and abſurdities attending this ſolitary plan, have paſſed haſtily into the other extreme; and have ſaid, that man is born wholly for ſociety; and that it is ſufficient he ſhould partake of that portion of knowledge and virtue, which actuate the particular community of which he is a member. With theſe perſons there is no common ſtandard of virtue and vice, to which all men may be directed; but every community furniſhes one; and communities are ſo different from each other, that what is a virtue in one is a vice in the other; and what is rewarded with honours and preferments in one, is execrated and puniſhed in another. Theſe perſons err, from taking their eſtimate of mankind on an improper ſcale. They ſay truly, that man is born for ſociety; it cannot be otherwiſe; he is born in ſociety; his underſtanding, paſſions, his very mind, are formed by its connections and events; and he muſt find his happineſs in the happineſs of it. But ſocieties are as individuals, they are born; that is, they are generated and produced, as uſeful parts of the great ſociety of mankind; and can find their happineſs only in the general happineſs of the whole world. Here we find a ſtandard of univerſal virtue, which while it regulates the whole univerſe, makes every individual of it happy. The ſame principles which render a man a proper, uſeful, and happy member of a private family, may be and muſt be applied to that family, as if it were an individual, to render it a proper branch of a pariſh; the ſame principles muſt actuate that pariſh, as they would a family, to render it an uſeful part of a county or a province; and that province, that it may contribute to the welfare

the kingdom: the ſame principles muſt actuate all kingdoms, as they do individuals to produce the general virtue and happineſs of mankind. Theſe principles are found in the nature of man; not as a ſolitary, but as a ſocial being; and the firſt, perhaps the moſt important, of theſe is that which leads him to ſpeak truth.

The firſt uſe which a child is led to make of his powers, may be called a language; and this language is ever true in the firſt ſtage of life, where it is uſed only to intimate a few and obvious wants. Words are taught children, as ſtanding for things, or for their ideas of things. When they ſtand for things, the objects themſelves are laid before them; and they acquire what is properly called truth in natural knowledge. When words ſtand only for ideas, and thoſe ideas have been tranſmitted from one man to another, or from one book to another, though the ideas have ariſen from obſervation and facts, yet they are matters of faith in natural knowledge, and can only be ſaid to be probabilities. In the ſame manner thoſe words which are the ſigns of moral truths, ſuch as good and evil, right and wrong, happy and miſerable, are wholly owing to experience; all the words or phraſes which repreſent doctrines, principles and precepts, which hav ariſen from the experience of others, are only probabilities, and matters of faith. This will give us an idea of natural and moral truths as ſtated and conveyed by words. We ſhall ſee how unfavourable the education of youth is to the poſſeſſion of truth, or to the habit of ſpeaking it.

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They are neceſſarily taught the proper names of the objects which continually ſurround them; but thoſe objects are few, during that very ſhort period, in which they have generally ſome ſhare of their parents' ill-directed and miſtaken tenderneſs. When the very helpleſs period of infancy is over, we know into what hands children are generally committed; and we may give up all animadverſion on the manner in which they are inſtructed to uſe words as the ſigns of natural and moral truths.

We need not hold up to ridicule and deteſtation, a part of the community, which is unfortunate from its very ſituation; and more ſo from the ignorance and vice to which it is ſubject. It is adding inſolence to cruelty, to complain of thoſe vices in ſervants, which are immediately and almoſt wholly occaſioned by their maſters. But this matter ſhall be conſidered at another time. We are now to attend to the firſt conſequence of committing children to the care of ſervants; that is, that all children without an exception in a million, are liars. In all the experience which I have had of youth, I have never found a ſingle exception; and they have been generally addicted to the odious vice of falſifying, in exact proportion to the elevation of their rank, and conſequently to the negligence of their parents concerning them. In the firſt ſteps of what is commonly called their education, the perſons who direct it, generally perceive the difficulty of correcting this vice; and they either do not make the attempt, or they puniſh it with ſeverity. The conſequence of the former is obvious: the conſequence of the latter is not always a cure. Indeed it is ſeldom or never the object. Men

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by puniſhing falſehood have ſeldom thought of removing the principle or habit which may lead to it; they only mean to puniſh a preſent injury, or to prevent an inconvenience. They conſider veracity as they do a perfect moral character, a thing rather to be wiſhed for than expected, an ideal excellence, but not actually to be found in any man.

This is one among many reaſons for ſuppoſing the knowledge and morals of the ancients to have been much ſuperior to ours. Herodotus ſays, that the ancient Perſians took their children out of the hands of the women at the age of five years, and placed them in large communities, under the direction of wiſe and virtuous men, where they were fitted for the duties of citizens and ſubjects of the ſtate, by being taught to ride the horſe, to uſe the bow, and to ſpeak truth. This was accompliſhed at the age of ſixteen; and they were then admitted as men, to take their proper ſtation in the community. If the manner in which theſe ſages formed the habit of veracity, put it to trials, and eſtabliſhed it, had been preſerved, it would have furniſhed more uſeful aſſiſtance than any we have yet derived from the wiſdom of antiquity. That they ſucceeded in this firſt and moſt important duty, we learn from the beſt hiſtorical authorities. Arrian, who may be ſuppoſed to have no partiality to the inhabitants of the eaſt, enumerates their orders and claſſes with great accuracy, and knowledge. "The ſixth claſs," ſays he, "is their ſuperviſors or inquiſitors. Theſe enquire into all tranſactions in the cities and in the fields, and give an account thereof to their kings, if they live under a regal go-

vernment, or to their chief magiſtrate, if in a free city. They may not be guilty of falſehood: and indeed none of the Indians were ever accuſed of that crime." This ſeems to us wholly incredible. For though we may ſay of men, that they are wiſe, knowing, generous, brave, and even religious; yet how extremely ſeldom is it in our power to ſay that their veracity may always, and in all caſes, be depended upon. The opinions of the ancients concerning truth and falſehood, the one the effect of true wiſdom, and the other of real folly, may be ſeen by the declarations even of their poets; and particularly by thoſe of Homer. Neſtor was famed for wiſdom; and Minerva, under the form of Mentor, adviſes Telemachus to go to the ſage old man; and aſſures him, that upon being addreſſed with reverend awe and decent confidence, he would relate what he knew of Ulyſſes.

" Urge him with truth to frame his fair replies—
" And ſure he will, for wiſdom never lies.

We have no proof more humiliating of our remaining barbariſm, and the little progreſs we have made in real knowledge and virtue, than our diſregard to truth: a vice which renders fruitleſs our endeavours to become of any ſervice or ornament in ſociety. It deſtroys that confidence, that eſteem and regard, without which we cannot be good for any thing, as members of families. It diſcovers the loweſt degree of depravity, when the ſtrong ties of domeſtic union and happineſs are broken by this evil; when a child will deceive and ſay untruths to his pa-

rent, or a parent to his child; a brother to a brother, or a ſiſter to a ſiſter. When this is the caſe, our minds are like ſtreams poiſoned in their ſources, which diffuſe vice and miſery wherever they flow. Men become totally, and almoſt inevitably abandoned, who are forced into falſehood by their firſt and ſtrongeſt family connections. Indeed, it is but ſeldom that public morals are ſo profligate as thoroughly to infect private families: the members of which generally agree in a common intereſt; and have ſo much regard to that intereſt, that they often ſpeak truth to one another. This, it is to be feared, is the utmoſt praiſe of modern veracity; when the teſt of it is applied to the people in general. Individuals muſt be often excepted from general deſcriptions, and the exceptions in this caſe may be more numerous than we can poſſibly be aware of. We can ſpeak only of thoſe appearances which mark the ſeveral orders, claſſes, profeſſions and trades of men; and which, it muſt be owned, are not ſo favourable, as we could wiſh, to an opinion of their veracity. If men get into the habit of falſehood, by the unnatural oppoſition of intereſts in private families; and find themſelves from infancy under a kind of neceſſity to deceive thoſe whom they ought to honour and love; it is very ſeldom they can ever be recovered to virtue. If they get into this habit from the ſeverity of their parents; and there is no cauſe of lying more general than fear; if it be owing to negligence, and the leſſons, converſation and example of ſervants: all theſe cauſes form principles, as they operate early; or they give a taint to the character, which hardly any future induſtry and care will remove.

This, in any degree, is a bad preparation for the intercourſes of ſociety, where intereſt is oppoſed by affections which are leſs powerful; and the temptations to treachery and falſehood have a greater effect. A man who would feel reluctance and regret at deceiving a father or a brother, though he might gain ſomething by it, might not feel them in his tranſactions with a neighbour, or a ſtranger. This evil multiplies in its ſtrength and rancour, as it is diffuſed; contrary to the uſual effects of natural poiſons, which are weakened by diffuſion. We ſee communities in the following ſtate. The individuals of which families are compoſed are of that mixed and doubtful character, which we can hardly ever claſs with the virtuous or the vicious, and they form thoſe neutral and inſipid ſocieties, which are objects neither of deſire nor of averſion. In the dealings of family with family, and in the formation of neighbourhoods, villages, towns, &c. the evil begins to appear; falſehood and treachery are leſs reſtrained; and things are done by man to man, neighbour to neighbour, and fellow-citizen to fellow-citizen, which would be ſhocking in a private family; we perceive and make no ſcruple to ſay that theſe little communities are rather vicious than good, and that a man had need of prudence and caution to live in them. Here then the road is open to univerſal vice and villainy; from the influence of that treachery, that diſregard to truth; which, in a private family, lay concealed, as a grain of ſeed in the earth. For in proportion as a neighbourhood, or a town, conſiſting of men not virtuous, not having a regard to truth, is more immoral in its actions than its individuals; juſt ſo is the kingdom or empire compoſed of thoſe

towns, more vicious than the towns themſelves. Theſe matters form a circle, the extremes of which at laſt meet; and vice is virtue and virtue vice. We may appeal to facts, which daily occur, for the truth of what is here advanced. Read the negotiations of all the nations in Europe with each other; their treaties of alliance and commerce; the reaſons and motives which have induced them to make war or peace: deduce, as you eaſily may, the principles upon which one nation acts towards another; and ſee whether an individual would dare, in the moſt abandoned community, to adopt them. It is idle to ſay they are neceſſary; ſo are all villanies to villains, to obtain their ends. This is ſo notorious that perfidy, treachery, falſehood, are formed into ſyſtems, under the appellation of policy; and pious kings and miniſters avow them without ſhame or remorſe. It is thus, indeed, according to a profligate writer, that private vices become public benefits; and the world is univerſally actuated by the principles of gamblers and robbers. We may be aſſured of this general truth, which each of us may apply as he thinks proper, that when men agree to act in communities, on principles which they would be aſhamed of as individuals, it is becauſe they partake, in their private characters of that evil which actuates the whole; and no nation ever acted on fraudulent and falſe maxims, when the majority of the people who compoſed that nation were honeſt men, and had a real regard for truth.

To ſpeak truth is one of thoſe neceſſary things, without which a man cannot be a proper uſeful and happy member of a family; can-

cannot be truſted in any concern of trade or buſineſs; cannot be ſafely treated with as an acquaintance or friend; cannot collectively with others form ſuch aſſociations, communities, and empires, as will be for the real benefit and happineſs of mankind.

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1822

LECTURES

ON THE

UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES AND DUTIES

OF

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

AS THEY HAVE BEEN READ IN

MARGARET-STREET, CAVENDISH-SQUARE,

IN THE YEARS 1776, AND 1777.

BY THE

REV. DAVID WILLIAMS.

Αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν. PLATO.

VOL. II.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;
AND SOLD BY THE FOLLOWING BOOKSELLERS IN LONDON:
J. DODSLEY, PALL-MALL; J. ALMON, AND W. DAVIS, PICCADILLY;
P. ELMSLEY, STRAND; G. KEARSLEY, FLEET-STREET;
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MDCCLXXIX.

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MORAL LECTURES.

LECTURE XXII.

HONESTY.

Provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men.

IT would be extremely difficult to ſpeak on a ſubject ſo well underſtood as honeſty, in ſuch a manner as to gain the attention of an audience. It is hardly poſſible to define it, ſo as to make any impreſſion on the mind; or to place it in a light that may be new and ſtriking. We are ſunk into a general corruption, and our knowledge is of ſuch a nature, as to be of little or no uſe to our morals. We talk conſiſtently and plauſibly of what is proper and fit to be done, in almoſt every caſe; and we generally practiſe it in none. What is the duty of thoſe who take upon them the office of public monitors, adviſers, and preachers, in ſuch a ſtate of things?—

To call in the aid of religion——What religion?—The Chriſtian religion.——And what uſe can be made of it, with perſons who do not, cannot, be imagined to believe its principles and doctrines?——This is not a charge at random; it is not owing to diſaffection to any body of people, but a real opinion, the effect of cool and careful obſervation. A penetrating and candid mind, on a view of the religious conduct of the people, would be led to conclude, that, in this country, where the goſpel has been profeſſed above a thouſand years, and where it has long been publicly countenanced, encouraged, and honoured, there are not many more real Chriſtians, than in Arabia, or Turkey, or any of the moſt devoted dominions of Mahomet. This is not meant as an inſinuation that the people are Atheiſts, or Deiſts, or any thing which ſuppoſes they have ſubſtituted one ſet of principles for another. When it is ſaid, that the people in general are not Chriſtians, it is ſaying they have no religion, and hardly any moral principles at all. I ſhould be ſorry to be obliged to put the matter beyond diſpute, at the expence even of this aſſembly; and I have no reaſon to think more unfavourably of the people who compoſe it, than of the reſt of the world. But if I were to aſk almoſt any of you, who call yourſelves Chriſtians——Do you ever read your Bible?—No; unleſs it be a chapter now and then on Sundays.——But do you read it ſo as to underſtand the general tenor and intention of it?—No.——What are the ſources from which you derive your principles? Upon what grounds are you prepared for the duties and buſineſs of life? In ſhort, how have you been educated; and what has your attention been directed

to, as the means of your future happineſs?—Almoſt every man, who now hears me, if he were to ſpeak as he feels, would freely anſwer—to my own intereſt.——This is the great object of education, and the great end of life—It is from this, therefore, we muſt argue, if we mean to do the world any real ſervice. When the motives of religion furniſhed the firſt principles of education, thoſe motives were the moſt proper to be urged, to enforce any obligation or duty: but when they have loſt their weight, if not their credit; when men hear of them, as they hear of ghoſts and goblins and witches; or regard them with indifference and inattention; what is to be done?—Men cannot well be reaſoned with, but upon their own principles; and if they either have never had any religious principles, or have forgotten and loſt them; they muſt be addreſſed on thoſe which they have adopted in their ſtead. A general ſelfiſhneſs ſeems to be the religion of the preſent times; and no man can hope to be heard with attention, on the ſubject of the text, who cannot prove—" that honeſty is the beſt policy."

It may be ſaid, there can be no difficulty in this matter, when every body acknowledges it as an indiſputable truth. What men acknowledge in words is of no weight, when they contradict it in their actions. There is hardly a knave exiſting, who has not this proverb continually on his lips: he pronounces it gravely and ſententiouſly, at the very moment he is meditating ſome diſhoneſt tranſaction. Men utter moral ſentences, as ſome birds chatter words; and, in ſome caſes, it would be as difficult to

give ideas to the former as to the latter. Our real principles are not thoſe we are taught to repeat; but thoſe we are taught to act upon. No diſhoneſt man can believe, that "honeſty is "the beſt policy." Proverbial maxims, which are always in the mouths of people, when they are diſbelieved in reality, are of no more conſequence, and no more uſe to their morals and happineſs, than texts of ſcripture, which are read, or committed to memory, with careleſſneſs and inattention. However, as the minds of men are directed to their intereſt, it may be uſeful to enquire, whether it may not be their intereſt to be honeſt?

A habit of doing what is right, and a conſciouſneſs of it, is neceſſary to our private peace and ſatisfaction. This will be allowed, in the caſes of thoſe who are accuſtomed to conſider and to reflect on their behaviour. There is ſomething in the mind analogous to a court of juſtice, where our thoughts, motives, and actions are ſummoned and examined; and where a ſentence is pronounced, generally with truth and equity. This is the ground of private good or ill opinion; and conſequently of private ſatisfaction or diſſatisfaction. In this procedure, juſtice is ſeldom injured; never with impunity. No man becomes a villain, till he has reſolved to give up the matter of private ſatisfaction. There are ſo many circumſtances in a real ſelf-examination, favourable to truth---ſecrecy, the candour and partiality of the judge, &c. that it is hardly ever entered upon, without affording ſome glimpſe of truth to the mind; and a man is eaſy or uneaſy, happy or unhappy in himſelf, in proportion as this proceſs is fairly or unfairly conducted; and produces

duces a favourable or unfavourable ſentence. This employment of ſelf-examination, added to the neceſſary occupations of life, would very pleaſingly fill up our time, if our general actions were ſuch as would bear it. If we were trained in early youth to do good, and to examine it when done, we ſhould probably be rendered virtuous for life; but we are left to act at random, or are often taught to act ill; we are puniſhed by our conſciences; and, in order to avoid the uneaſineſs they occaſion, we ſeldom take the cauſe at its firſt origin; but, as our pain ariſes immediately from ſelf-examination, we drop the diſagreeable buſineſs, and do ill when we think it convenient, without ever calling ourſelves to account for it. Providence has ſtill a puniſhment for wickedneſs, in the private feelings of the mind, even where this buſineſs of reflection or examination is ſet aſide. There is an inſtantaneous feeling attending moral actions, which makes the mind happy or miſerable, according as its actions are good or bad. The general effects of theſe feelings, form what may be called the temper; and a man who avoids the ſolemn judgments of his conſcience, cannot avoid the general ſum and produce of his ill intentions and actions, in a certain bad and miſerable temper. We may go further—No wicked man enjoys his health; at leaſt, he does not enjoy it in the degree he would have done, if he had been virtuous. Every perſon who has attended to the mechanical effects of his actions, will underſtand this truth. What are the higheſt effects produced by remedies; but faint imitations of the effects of our paſſions? Honeſty is therefore neceſſary to health; and a habit of diſhoneſty, by the mere effects it would have on

our

our conſtitutions, would be ſufficient of itſelf to deſtroy us.—This is the firſt article in our moral arithmetick—A general ſenſe and conſciouſneſs that our actions are honeſt, is neceſſary to procure ſatisfaction, peace, and health to ourſelves.

But how ſhall we deal with the world?—We muſt, occaſionally, have ſome reſerve, or we cannot poſſibly live. Indeed ſome allowances muſt here be made, or the whole world is to be condemned. Perhaps there never exiſted a ſociety, in which a perſon, fulfilling its offices, could be ſtrictly and philoſophically honeſt. Almoſt every man, in every buſineſs or employment, feels the difficulty. I never knew the man who did not feel it, when not either hypocritical or abandoned. Every occupation; every branch of trade; every office; and even the moſt important and moſt ſacred profeſſions, have ſome uſages, cuſtoms, and obligations, interwoven with their very exiſtence, which muſt give pain to a mind rightly and honeſtly formed. We have, accordingly, ſeen many of the moſt excellent of our acquaintance exchanging one thing for another, and wandering from employment to employment, becauſe they could not allow of the abatement, which, in the purſuit of either, muſt be made on their ſelf-approbation. This is the reaſon, in a ſociety, whoſe maxims of conduct and means of ſucceſs are exceptionable, that men of the fineſt natural underſtandings, and beſt original principles, are not the moſt likely to be ſucceſsful. The firſt efforts of ſuch minds are directed too high; and perhaps their whole lives are ſpent in a ſeries of diſappointments, from being too honeſt for the community in which they live. Such is the

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ſtate of the world. Men have haſtily collected themſelves; and created wants and obligations and duties, which no mind perfectly honeſt can comply with. What can be done in this caſe? We ſeem to be reduced to a dilemma. We muſt either not live in ſociety, and take any part in its duties and concerns—or ceaſe to be honeſt men.

This matter ſeems to be ſettled by a common, though a tacit, opinion of mankind—that thoſe cuſtoms and uſages, which are annexed, by the ſociety itſelf, to any art, office, or profeſſion, are chargeable on the ſociety, and not on individuals. Thus, the tradeſman, in almoſt every branch of buſineſs, goes on through life in the conſtant practice of ſuch cuſtoms, which, if they had originated from himſelf, if he had not found them to be neceſſary appendages of his buſineſs, would have denominated him a villain. The merchant; the politician; and even the divine, have all their employments taxed by iniquity; and they are embarraſſed, either in entering on them, or in purſuing them, by ſome things that offend the mind of an honeſt man. A queſtion might here ariſe, whether, in ſuch a ſtate, it be the duty of a man to withdraw from the world, and live in ſolitude, or to join ſociety, and do evil in it, that good may come? This has often been a queſtion in the minds of individuals. Such philoſophers as Diogenes, and ſuch religioniſts as hermits, have thought it their duty to renounce the world, rather than any part of their integrity; and have lived, as much as poſſible, in a detached and ſolitary ſtate. The general opinion and practice of mankind are againſt this choice; and it ſeems to be a prin-

a principle eſtabliſhed by experience, that a ſtate of ſociety is neceſſary for men. When ſocieties are formed, their principles cannot be on the higheſt or the loweſt ſcale of virtue, among thoſe who form them; but on a ſcale between both. When a man, well formed by education, acts from himſelf, he acts from the beſt principles of goodneſs. When he takes the firſt ſtep in the community, and acts as part of a family, he finds conſiderations of various kinds mixing with his own views; and many indifferent qualities joined to his own virtues. He is incorporated with his family, and muſt act with that degree of virtue, which the whole is capable of producing. In proportion as he enlarges his ſocial connections, he probably lowers the quality of his own mind, until he becomes apparently the leaſt virtuous, while perhaps he may be the moſt uſeful, man alive; the wiſe ſtateſman of a great and happy country.

How are we to order matters in this difficult caſe? We cannot live in ſolitude; we cannot enter into ſociety, but at the expence of our integrity; and we cannot be happy in ourſelves, or eſteemed by others, if we are not honeſt men. If we look attentively into the world, we ſhall find this matter decided to our hands. Among our acquaintance there are thouſands, who will clear up this matter; men who do their buſineſs mechanically, as wheels perform their office; and ſubmit to public cuſtoms, without tainting their private character. In thoſe particulars, we know they will act, as all the world do: in every other inſtance, we know they will act from themſelves, as honeſt men. Here, and in almoſt all other caſes, the link by which we are drawn

drawn in ſociety, is viſible; and our ſocial acts are diſtinguiſhed from the effects of our private characters. No man has either the worſe opinion of another, or is more diſtruſtful of him, for acting on a lower ſcale than that of his own virtue, when he has followed the known laws or cuſtoms of his trade, of his profeſſion, or of his country. In ſhort, as in entering into ſociety, we give up a part of our natural liberty to ſecure the remainder; ſo we in a manner give up a part of our integrity, to ſecure the exerciſe of the reſt. But, in both caſes, the parts given up muſt be ſpecified and known; or the moſt fatal conſequences will ariſe to the liberties and virtue of the world. We ſhould carefully obſerve, that theſe deviations are only apparent in the individual; and that the fault, the crime, the guilt, is chargeable wholly on the ſociety; in which a man cannot live, without ſubmitting to ſuch uſages, and acting on ſuch principles, as he often diſapproves and condemns. Where he is at liberty to act from himſelf, his real principles and character are diſcovered; and it is on theſe that the judgment of the world is formed. Honeſty, therefore, is as neceſſary to the reputation of a man, in the preſent imperfect ſtate of ſociety, as it would be, if ſociety were formed on the higheſt and moſt excellent principles. Beſides the dexterity and addreſs which a man diſcovers in fulfilling the duties of his particular office or buſineſs, there is a general integrity of mind, which is ſhewn in voluntary exertions in the views which he forms; and in the general turn and nature of his converſation. This is that ſpecies of honeſty, which is called honour; and it is what the Apoſtle had probably in view, when he adviſes the

Romans to "provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men."—The word *honeſtum*, from which our word honeſt is derived, ſignified, not mere juſtice, for which the laws generally provided; but honour; a conduct right and proper, where the laws had left men at liberty, and they might do what was ſtrictly unjuſt and injurious. That a man will do what is juſt, when the laws puniſh injuſtice; that he will pay his debts, when he cannot avoid doing it; that, in buſineſs, he will deal as his neighbours do, when he cannot be in buſineſs without it; that he will fiulfil the duties of his place or his profeſſion, when he cannot have his ſalary or his reward without it—does not denominate him honeſt, in the ſenſe of the Apoſtle, or in the apprehenſion of the world. It is neceſſary that he ſhould be always juſt, where the laws do not interfere, and where he is at liberty to be otherwiſe; that he ſhould be ready to pay what is due from him, when he might avoid doing it, without danger or injury to himſelf; that he will deal honourably, not becauſe he is under a neceſſity of ſo doing, but from a real inclination to act well. In any office, or profeſſion, his real character will always ſhew itſelf in the manner in which all his duties are performed.

Indeed, no perſon is fit for any thing in ſociety, whoſe character is not honeſt. A diſhoneſt ſervant, or a diſhoneſt maſter, are unfit for their ſituations, and wretched in them: a huſband and wife, parents and children, loſe all confidence in each other, when they loſe their honeſty; and they always live

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in a ſtate of ſuſpicion and uneaſinſs.* View any of thoſe ſmaller communities, thoſe incorporated bodies, which, through a variety of unhappy cauſes, have become corrupt, and ſay, whether honeſty be not neceſſary to a ſociety. Extend your views to nations and kingdoms, and there are nations and kingdoms, who ſeem to be as deſtitute of honeſty as the worſt villain among individuals, who has ever ſuffered for his crimes:—ſee the ſtate of their councils; like the head of a wicked man, undetermined, confuſed, and diſtracted, all their public actions are a ſeries of iniquities; and they are hated at home, and deſpiſed by the world.

In religion, honeſty is ſomething like its very ſoul; without which all profeſſions and all forms are inſignificant. Opinions are borrowed from others, or taught by others; honeſty cannot; it muſt be cultivated by ourſelves. We have ſeen the higheſt pretences accompanied by the baſeſt conduct; the loudeſt clamour, concerning faith, covering the baſeſt practices. We ſee a man may be a Jew, or a Mahometan, or a Pagan, or a Chriſtian—and be either a good or bad man, according as he be honeſt or diſhoneſt. Enterpriſing and ambitious minds have divided the Chriſtian World into ſects and parties. They have pro-

* No perſon can be eſteemed in his trade, or carry it on to the greateſt advantage, whoſe character is not honeſt. Every profeſſion requires the higheſt degree of this virtue; or a man loſes the reſpect due to his ſtation. No degrees of learning, wiſdom, riches, or honours, will ſupply the place of honeſty, or procure reſpect, without it; and the man who poſſeſſes it will be eſteemed, and even honoured, though he be neither wiſe, nor learned, nor rich.

duced contentions, which anſwered the ends of thoſe leaders. But now the confuſion is over; we judge of things by the rule given by nature. When we are likely to have any connections with a man, we do not aſk whether he be a Calviniſt; for the anſwer would not inform us that he were fit to be truſted. We ſhould not be wiſer in Arminianiſm, Arianiſm, Socinianiſm, or any of thoſe ridiculous denominations, which have ſet the people at variance, and by which a few artful ſpirits have gratified their ambition or their avarice. We know a man may be a churchman, or a diſſenter, and be a bad man. He may be either of them; he may be a Jew, a Turk, a Pagan, and be a good man, if he be ſincere in his profeſſion, and honeſt in his intentions and actions. Honeſty is the pearl of great price, which gives value to all the circumſtances and forms of religion. We have no merit in our opinions. They are inſtilled into us by education, by authority, by influence, by chance. If we had been born in Judea, moſt of us would have been Jews; in Turkey, Mahometans; in China, Pagans—but if we had been ſincere in our belief, and honeſt in our characters, we ſhould have been ſecure of the approbation of God and men. In the Chriſtian World, we are, for the moſt part, of that church, or party, or ſect, which our fathers and friends have choſen for us: and what can any thing ſignify, which is not our own?—But the ſincerity with which we practiſe the duties of any religion, is the only circumſtance which renders it valuable, in the eſtimation of every ſufficient judge.

Thus it is in this world—Thoſe of you, who have any ſerious thoughts of another; who firmly believe that you ſhall

riſe again, after death, and give an account of what you have done in the body—on what circumſtances of your lives will you reſt your juſtification? On your deceitful profeſſions?—But your judge was not deceived; he ſaw the villain lurking in the ſaint; and you muſt ſtand before him, in all your real deformity. Will you tell him—Lord, I was a Chriſtian, and enliſted under the banners of Calvin, or Luther, or Arminius; I mangled and tore and murdered my fellow-creatures; and when I could not do ſo, I deſtroyed their reputation and peace; and all for thy glory?—The judge muſt condemn, to utter darkneſs, all thoſe who could ſubſtitute villainy for goodneſs. Here even ſincerity will not avail; for a man may be ſincerely, and from his heart, an enemy to goodneſs, and to the peace of mankind; and yet be deſerving of the utmoſt condemnation.

At that ſolemn day, when we imagine judgment may be pronounced on the whole race of mankind, the little diſtinctions ariſing from nations, religions, ſects, parties, as they could have had but little moral influence, can hardly be taken into the account. All muſt be determined by the intentions of the mind, and the actions which thoſe intentions have produced. The honeſt poor man, who filled his ſtation as he ought; has not meddled with his neighbour's property, though urged by temptation; has brought up his family to induſtry, and trained it up in the fear of God; has paſſed his life in uſeful labour; and reſigned his ſpirit into the hands of his Maker—this man, we muſt ſuppoſe, will be brought forward and honoured, for eternity; while kings and prieſts and magiſtrates and miniſters, are calling to the hills and the rocks to fall on them, and hide them.

LECTURE XXIII.

JUSTICE, ACCORDING TO NATURE, PART I.

As ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye alſo unto them.

ALL our powers are given us to make us happy; and virtue conſiſts in the proper exertion of them. The happineſs to be obtained by virtuous induſtry, creates an intereſt; which, in the ſame manner that we find effects becoming cauſes on other occaſions, becomes one of the moſt powerful motives of human conduct. Indeed, moraliſts, of very reſpectable abilities, have looked no further than to this motive, as the firſt ſpring of all human actions. But we have already conſidered the original principles which create this intereſt; we have ſhewn, that it cannot be rightly formed, but upon thoſe principles; and that, however it may afterwards produce moral or immoral actions, it is only a ſecondary cauſe of them. It is in the formation of this principle of intereſt, which often becomes the general cauſe of human actions, that we are to find the origin of human vices. Men are ſeldom led out of the paths of virtue, but by ſome miſtake or other in reſpect to intereſt.

The world is evidently conſtituted, by the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Almighty, ſo, that private happineſs produces ſocial; and ſocial happineſs produces the public and the general happineſs of mankind. The firſt direct and natural exertion of our abilities is attended with pleaſure; which we are very apt to conſider as children do any gratification, and to fix our affections upon to an improper degree. Moral pleaſure is ſo truly intereſting and affecting, that it cannot be wondered at, we ſhould become covetous of it; and that even virtue ſhould be, as it really is, the origin of vice. If the employment of our powers were not attended with a virtuous and exquiſite pleaſure, there would be no ground for deſires; none for inordinate ones; and conſequently no poſſibility of vice.

That God has given us abilities to provide for our preſervation, ſupport, convenience, and happineſs, we may readily allow; and we ſhall probably think it our duty to employ them to thoſe ends. The firſt error we are apt to commit, is to forget that others are conſtituted and employed in the ſame manner with ourſelves; and that it is not only a cool determination of reaſon, they ſhould have room given them to exert their abilities, and to make themſelves happy, as we do; but that this conduct is neceſſary to the exiſtence of ſociety, where alone we can find our happineſs. If we could ſuppoſe a man detached wholly from ſociety, the powers which he would employ would be limited by his wants, and the circumſtances ariſing from his ſituation. He might change the place of his habitation; tear up freſh ground every ſeaſon; take the productions

tions of the earth where he could find them; he would have none to injure; and every licence he could take, would be but a ſmall conſolation for being excluded ſociety. But we are hardly born, before we are ſubjected to the reſtraints of ſocial obligations; and the leſſons of our infancy ſhould be, to employ our powers with benefit to ourſelves, and without injury to others. This is the firſt idea we can have of juſtice; which is coldly and improperly taught, as a duty deduced from the concluſions of reaſon; when it is an obligation of abſolute neceſſity; when ſociety cannot exiſt without it; and when the happineſs of man reſults from it, as any neceſſary effect from a cauſe. It is ſaying too little on this ſubject, that it is but fair, it is but right, that we ſhould do unto others, as we would be done by. Men could not aſſociate without juſtice. It is the very principle which enables them to unite; and lays the foundation of thoſe affections, which make them uſeful and happy.

Moraliſts and divines have divided our duties into thoſe of perfect, and thoſe of imperfect, obligation. Thoſe of perfect obligation are indiſpenſible; thoſe of imperfect obligation are not always neceſſary to every character; but are commendable and honourable, wherever they are found. Juſtice is among the firſt duties of perfect obligation; and generoſity holds a reſpectable rank among thoſe of imperfect obligation. Juſtice is a duty of every member of ſociety; generoſity may not. This is the reaſon of the different eſtimation in which theſe virtues are held. Juſtice is expected, and inſiſted upon, as neceſſary to that part which every one is to act in ſociety: he is not honoured and

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applauded for being juſt; for the obligation is ſuch, that it is ſuppoſed he cannot diſpenſe with it: he receives praiſe for his generoſity, becauſe this pre-ſuppoſes his being juſt; it is taken for granted he has fulfilled his neceſſary duties, and has the power and inclination to do more, and either to alleviate the miſery, or add to the happineſs, of others, by acts which are not of abſolute obligation.

Reverſe theſe characters, and they will not appear ſo contraſted as perhaps you would expect. As, in nature, the ſtrongeſt lights produce the deepeſt ſhades: ſo, in morals, it might be expected that the greateſt glory ſhould be oppoſed to the deepeſt diſgrace. It is not ſo in fact. In the preſent morality, juſtice is not honoured and applauded: when a man has done a juſt action, the utmoſt he expects is, that the world ſhould be ſatisfied he has done what he muſt not avoid doing: but if he does not what juſtice requires; if he commits an act of injuſtice, he is infamous, he is perhaps ignominiouſly puniſhed. If a man is generous, he is applauded; if he is not generous, he is not diſhonoured: viz. if he performs the moſt neceſſary duty, he has no praiſe; and if he does not perform it, he is diſhonoured: if he performs the leſs important duty, he is praiſed; and if he neglects it, he is not blamed. There is ſome material error running through the whole of this doctrine; which all the moral and religious diſquiſitions, I have read, have helped to countenance; and which has ever had, and all errors will ever have, a pernicious effect on the morals of men. The pureſt ages of antiquity ſeem not to be free from it; and yet their ſen-

timents of juſtice were more natural, more honourable, than thoſe of modern times. The appellation of juſt, given by the Athenians to one of the moſt temperate, laborious, and public-ſpirited of her citizens, ſhews they had ideas of juſtice very different from ours.

Let us conſider men as in ſociety, and in that firſt ſtate of relation to each other, which forms a family. We ſay, a perſon has done juſtice by his child, when he has afforded him the uſual aſſiſtance and ſuſtenance; given him the uſual education; and introduced him into the world, as young perſons of his rank and fortune are uſually introduced. If he does more, he is praiſed; if he does leſs, he is blamed. In like manner we judge of the tranſactions of families with each other, and the concerns of trade. If commodities are exchanged, according to a rule agreed upon by common conſent; if things are bought and ſold, with the advantages which cuſtom allows; men are ſaid to be juſt. They muſt not deviate from this rule to the diſadvantage of others, or they would be diſhonoured: if they deviate, to their own prejudice, they are praiſed; becauſe they do more than cuſtom, which is called juſtice, requires they ſhould do. It is ſo in the general connections of moral life. A man who employs all his abilities, and ſpends his whole fortune, for his perſonal gratification and pleaſure, while he ſees diſtreſs and miſery, which ſelf-denial might enable him to relieve; is deemed an honeſt man, if he keeps within the laws and cuſtoms, and does not actually injure his fellow-creatures. He would be blamed and execrated, if he were to commit acts of injuſtice;

juſtice; he is not blamed for want of generoſity and humanity. This is the caſe in the diſcharge of public offices; magiſtrates and miniſters and kings are expected to be juſt; they are bleſſed and applauded when beneficent and good. The error here is fatal to moral virtue, and the general manners of the people; for it makes cuſtom to be the foundation of juſtice; and cuſtom is a wretched principle of morals.

Juſtice is that principle of nature, by which men are united in ſociety, and upon which it is neceſſary they ſhould act. There are certain degrees of it, without which a ſociety cannot ſubſiſt. Theſe are generally rendered obligatory by laws; or are agreed upon by common conſent, in all families and neighbourhoods, as neceſſary to the general ſafety. When this ſafety is provided for, men are conceived to be at liberty, as to the great purpoſe of aſſociating, that of making the whole community happy. Here the error begins to have its effect; and honour and diſhonour are univerſally aſſigned to the diſcouragement and injury of moral virtue. As the great end of a community, which is happineſs, is ſuperior to any means which may aſſiſt in procuring it; ſo the obligation and neceſſity laid upon every man, by the public opinion, to promote happineſs, ought to be greater than that of merely not injuring. And it is as neceſſary, on the real principles of nature, that a wiſe, a powerful, and wealthy man, ſhould do every poſſible good, according to his utmoſt ability, as that the moſt common and moſt ignorant perſons ſhould be reſtrained from plundering, maiming, and murdering each other. This is only juſtice, according to nature; though various names may be applied to the ſeveral modifications of it, according to cuſtom.

It is wrong, therefore, and impolitic, to aſſign diſgrace and puniſhment to the wretch, who, by neceſſity, or even by folly, is induced to ſeize unjuſtly another's property; unleſs greater infamy were allotted to that man, who waſtes, in brutiſh gratifications, thoſe means, which might and ought to have been applied to increaſe the general happineſs. Acts of common duty, of generoſity, of humanity, of valour, and of public ſpirit, are but different names for acts of juſtice; and a poor man, who performs his duty, makes his family happy, and does all the good to his neighbourhood, acts exactly on the ſame principles, and is entitled to the ſame praiſe, with the rich and great and wiſe man, who employs all his fortune and abilities for the public happineſs. It is, therefore impolitic, and injurious to virtue, to make the utmoſt induſtry and juſtice of a poor man matters of obligation, and the caſual exertions of the rich matters of praiſe—to diſhonour the former for neglecting his limited duty, while the latter is excuſed for neglecting greater and more important obligations.

The great laws of nature are applied without diſtinction to all the world: they are like thoſe which regulate the atmoſphere, and which make the ſun to ſhine, and the rain to fall equally on all ranks and all ſorts of men. God requires that all be juſt. He ſpeaks in thoſe eternal principles, on which ſocieties are formed and made happy. The duties of men vary, not in their nature, but in their number, according to the difference of their ſtations; and a wiſe and powerful and wealthy man, who, becauſe he may, is unjuſt to the intereſts of ſociety, and neglects to do what he ought to do to make it proſperous and happy,

happy, ought to have more blame and more infamy, than any poor man, who violates thoſe parts of juſtice, which are intereſted only in the ſecurity of property. But ſyſtems of morality and religion, as well as forms of government, are made for the rich and great, and not on the general plans of truth and nature. The object ſeems to be, in all of them, not to obtain the greateſt quantity of happineſs for the whole, but the greateſt which can be obtained for one ſet of men, to be contraſted with the miſery of the reſt. We muſt not, therefore, be intimidated by prejudices and cuſtoms and ſyſtems, if we would come at truth; and truth alone can make us happy.—Let us liſten to the univerſal voice of God; and let us ſay, That the father, who, while he ſupports and provides a fortune for his child, neglects to put him in the path of real knowledge and virtue, fails in the moſt important obligation of juſtice; that the man who takes undue advantage of another, becauſe laws and cuſtoms permit him; the man who thrives by the induſtry of thoſe whom he is ſuffered to keep as dependant brutes; the rich man, who waſtes, or hoards, thoſe means, which, though in his hands, belong to the community, and ſhould be employed for its happineſs; the magiſtrate and the prince, who have powers of doing good, and do not uſe them—are all unjuſt, and infamous offenders againſt the great and univerſal laws of God.

As a collection will be made for thoſe who contribute to your entertainment, and, I hope, give ſome aſſiſtance to your devotion,

devotion, by ſinging anthems and pſalms in this chapel, I think it neceſſary to ſay ſomething in behalf of it. The form of public worſhip, which is uſed here, was drawn up for the accommodation of thoſe perſons who might be in the ſituation I was in myſelf; diſapproving the metaphyſical and controvertible doctrines which run through the common forms, and yet retaining that ſenſibility which is advantageouſly affected by a general view of God's works, and a ſummary and ſocial recognition of our moral obligations. The world in general is divided—into the votaries of ſuperſtition, and thoſe of a coarſe, contemptuous, immoral infidelity. Between theſe extremes, there are ſome, who have all the devotion of the former, without their abſurdities; and all the philoſophy and good ſenſe of the latter, without their immoral callouſneſs, their undiſtinguiſhing, idiotic, and affected contempt of common cuſtoms and opinions, and their general and pernicious profligacy. They worſhip the Deity only in his works; and they recogniſe his perfections, not to influence his will, or even to move his compaſſion; but to keep before their minds a perfect object of moral imitation. Theſe perſons, indeed, are but very few in number. We meet with thouſands who diſapprove of the common principles and forms; who joke at religion, and even ſneer at the Deity. We ſeldom meet a man, who has had the reſolution to reſcue his mind from errors, without tearing up his moral principles; hardly any one, who has not loſt the pleaſing and uſeful diſpoſition of ſtudying nature with moral views; of tracing the laws of it, with affectionate ſentiments of their Author; and of ennobling

ennobling moral virtue, with the pure, but ſublime, enthuſiaſm of true religion.

Upon theſe principles this morning lecture has been introduced, and will be continued, if it can be done without much inconvenience and loſs. I am under a neceſſity of ſaying, that I have, hitherto, not only given my time in compoſing and preaching the lectures; but have actually paid a great part of the expences here. The perſon who conducts the ſinging offered to aſſiſt in my deſign, and to leave it to the juſtice and generoſity of the hearers, to recompenſe him, and thoſe whom he employs; as I could not afford to be at any further expence. He is not in circumſtances to give away his time and talents; and he pays thoſe who aſſiſt him: it ſeems therefore juſt, that thoſe who may be amuſed and benefited by his means, ſhould contribute to his ſupport. It may be an additional inducement, with ſome of you, to this kind of generoſity, I am ſure it would be with me, that a youth, who ſeems to be ſober and well-inclined, and is likely to poſſeſs the firſt abilities and talents as a ſinger, ſhould ſee it is poſſible to live by thoſe talents, without devoting them to the intereſts of profligacy and vice. It is common enough to hear men talk, with apparent regret, that vicious diſſipation and pleaſure deſtroy the principles and morals of the world. True; for profligacy and vice can reward her ſervants; virtue ſeems to be at ſo low an ebb, that her votaries muſt often ſuffer and ſtarve. This ſhould be ſeriouſly conſidered; and men ſhould act on ſuch conſiderations, and not merely talk of them. They ſhould begin

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by changing gradually the channel of their expences. If every man, who talks of virtue, would aſſiſt a reformation, by tranſferring the money he ſpends idly and viciouſly to ſome reaſonable and good purpoſes, we ſhould ſoon ſee a change of public manners; and thoſe who aſſiſt in keeping virtue in countenance, in ſupporting thoſe principles which make ſociety happy, would have a part of thoſe advantages, which are now wholly in the hands of perſons who do every thing to corrupt and injure the community, both by the exertion of their talents, and the influence of their converſation and example.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXIV.

JUSTICE, ACCORDING TO NATURE. PART II.

As ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye alſo unto them.

IN the laſt lecture, we have ſeen the abſurdity of ſeveral diſtinctions, which opinion and cuſtom have made between juſtice and thoſe virtues which are only modifications of it; diſtinctions unfavourable to the general intereſt of moral virtue. Our attention was taken up principally with the opulent and powerful among mankind; who have created theſe diſtinctions, as they have almoſt all others, in favour of themſelves. It was not meant, however, to intimate a wiſh, that the motives to what is called common juſtice, among common people, might be relaxed. The reaſons are good and ſacred, which ſupport that ſpecies of juſtice, on which the ſecurity of property, and the ſafety of the ſtate, depend. What we ſhould bear in mind is, that juſtice is a duty of univerſal obligation; and that while the poor man is obliged, not to ſteal; to work with his hands; and to employ his ſkill, in conſideration of the ſupport and payment he receives: ſo is the rich and powerful man equally obliged to uſe his riches and power, which are the

talents aſſigned him, to do the utmoſt good he can to ſociety. Theſe duties are all equally matters of juſtice; and it is an abuſe of language, injurious to virtue, to annex to the duty of the poor man an idea of neceſſity and obligation, and to allow him no praiſe; while that of the rich ſeems to be left to his choice, to flow from his diſpoſition, and is to be highly honoured and applauded, if he ſhould deign to perform it.

This is the reaſon why the vices which infeſt ſociety proceed originally from the rich and powerful; never from the poor. In all the communities of the world, the rich and powerful alone are in the condition of moral agents; they alone make laws and form cuſtoms; which are all in their own favour; moſt of them injudicious, oppreſſive, and cruel: the poor and common people are machines, acted upon by theſe laws and cuſtoms; and they are induſtrious, regular, decent, and tolerably happy; or they are idle, vicious, profligate, and miſerable, according to the principles of that government which their ſuperiors have formed for them; to the cuſtoms which they think fit to introduce; and the examples they ſet before them. We ſee here a ſufficient reaſon for the diſtinction and ſeparation of men's duties;—why a ſtrict obſervance of the rules of juſtice is required from the poor, while the great and rich are left at liberty; or, when they obſerve them, the duties are called by new names, and thoſe who perform them are highly honoured and praiſed. This diſtinction may be obſerved in different degrees of abſurdity and cruelty, from the conduct of the man who thrives by the induſtry of his neighbours, and is applauded for his gene-

roſity, in ſome occaſional bounties out of the fruits of their labours—to the higheſt iniquity of human nature, the tyranny of a deſpot, who, having reduced men by oppreſſion, want, and miſery, into a timid and ſlaviſh debility, is to be applauded for his grace, in chartering their lives, and allowing them the probable and precarious uſe of ſmall portions of their own properties.

The general miſery and profligacy of the people, are in exact proportion to the vices of government; and to the oppreſſions and bad examples of the great. The frequency and ſeverity of public executions, and the number and cruelty of penal laws, are all of the ſame origin; a falſe idea of that general juſtice, which ſhould actuate the whole community. Governments are jealous and vindictive, in proportion as their principles are ill-founded and vicious; and the frequency and ſeverity of puniſhments, are certain indications of eſſential errors in the public conſtitution. Though we are not to conſider governments and public cuſtoms as the firſt ſources in nature of virtue and vice; yet they are ſecondary cauſes of them; and communities of men may be often found in ſuch circumſtances, as not to be apparently influenced by any cauſes which are nearer to nature. This may be ſaid of almoſt all the ſocieties of Europe; where men are collected in ſituations ſo unnatural, that their only principles of virtue and vice muſt be the cuſtoms and laws of the countries where they live. When we ſpeak of man in ſuch a ſtate of ſociety as nature points out, we ſpeak of one kind of being; when we ſpeak of the wretched mechanical ſlave of modern governments, we ſpeak of another kind of being. The advocates

of oppreſſion and tyranny would ſmile at us, as impotently aiming to give credit to levelling principles, and wiſhing to introduce that equality among mankind, which viſionaries have dreamed of, but which cannot be actually introduced. Men are much nearer to a ſtate of equality in their preſent circumſtances, than they would be on the principles of juſtice, humanity, and nature. All the parts and members of a vicious community are miſerable almoſt alike; they differ only in glitter and ſhew.—The man who oppreſſes, and the wretch who is oppreſſed; the the tyrant whoſe paſtimes and amuſements are tortures, and the man who expires under them, are on an equal footing in point of happineſs. Virtue only creates a real and eſſential difference in the allotments of men; and virtue is unknown in ſuch ſocieties. The conſequence of forming communities, on the principles of juſtice, would be ſo far from levelling the conditions, ranks, and enjoyments of men, that it would introduce real, inſtead of imaginary, diſtinctions; and their ſituations would be much more varied than they are at preſent. Juſtice might form a government on what is called an equal and level principle. It would make men ſtart together from ſimilar ſituations; but it would not, and could not, allot equal degrees of ſucceſs, credit, and enjoyment, to unequal talents and induſtry. The difference, therefore, between a ſociety formed on juſt principles, and thoſe conſtitutions we know of in the world, is this:—In the former, men's ranks, honours, and enjoyments, would admit of great difference and variety; much the greater part would be happy; while none would be oppreſſed, none would be wretched. In the latter, ranks and honours are allotted by rules which

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have no relation to merit, and admit of but little variation; they are ſuited to the paſſion of vanity, and not held before the underſtanding or the heart; they have, therefore, no tendency to happineſs: ſo far from being the effects of virtue and induſtry, they are ſpoils cruelly forced from them. In ſuch ſocieties, ſome may appear to be elevated, and may be decorated with tinſel; but none are happy; while the greater part are poor, oppreſſed, and wretched. Theſe ſhould be called the levelling principles, and not thoſe which would form natural and happy ſocieties. Juſtice admits of all the variety of enjoyments, which can be procured by the various merits and talents of men. Injuſtice divides them only into two orders, maſters and ſlaves; and only ſeparates their miſeries into various kinds—the tyrant and oppreſſor being only a wretch of a different complexion from the pooreſt ſlave in his dominions.

If we conſider diviſions of communities, and the ſmalleſt aſſociations of men, we ſhall find that vice proceeds in the ſame direction; that injuſtice originates with the intereſt and power of the rich; and the injuſtice and profligacy of the poor are effects, and not cauſes: I mean in general: there are vices which ariſe from poverty; but that poverty may have been occaſioned by the injuſtice of the rich and great.

On the principles of real juſtice and honeſty, it is neceſſary, not only that a man ſhould do as others uſually do in ſimilar ſituations, which may denominate him juſt according to cuſtom and law; but that he ſhould do unto others as he would reaſonably

reaſonably expect that others ſhould do unto him, if their circumſtances were exchanged.

We ſee, then, that, on this large and natural principle of juſtice, there would be no tyranny, oppreſſion, ſlavery, and wretchedneſs, in civil ſocieties. Princes and magiſtrates, in the exertions of their power, would aim to procure the general happineſs: for, in perſonating others, even by imagination and reaſon, they would neceſſarily conclude, that this muſt be their reaſonable expectation. They would not take their meaſures from precedents left them; rights eſtabliſhed by cuſtom; and prerogatives formed by power; but they would feel as men acting on men; and have a rule of juſtice, which, while it would ſecure and heighten their dignities and honours, would alſo give them a ſatisfaction, which hardly any potentate ever knew—that of ſeeing a whole community happy by their means.

We need not waſte our time on the diſtinctions eſtabliſhed between legal and moral juſtice. The influence of power, and the temptations of a lucrative profeſſion, have done greater things, than to pervert the underſtandings of lawyers, and produce a falſe and quibbling ſyſtem of juriſprudence. It would be difficult to govern a community without laws; for the leaſt iniquity in government will produce diſorders among the people; and ſuch a government muſt reſtrain them by written and arbitrary laws. Theſe laws multiply with the defects of government, and with the vices of the people; and they muſt be contrived, adminiſtered, defended, and kept in credit, by the utmoſt talents of a profeſſion. Such a ſyſtem could not be ſupported,

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it would be deſtroyed, by wiſdom. Wiſdom is the cauſe of virtue. A certain plauſible cunning; a certain agility in parrying the blows of truth; the art of making diſtinctions without differences; and running every thing into doubt and obſcurity, is the ſubſtitute of real and manly wiſdom, in a profeſſion ariſing from ſpurious or vicious principles. The term, wiſdom, is therefore always miſapplied to that ſolemn and plauſible artifice, which is employed indiſcriminately in good and evil cauſes, and is actuated only by intereſt. Every ſpecies of falſehood and vice is inconſiſtent with wiſdom:

"For never, never wicked man was wiſe."

Here, however, the admonitions of truth and virtue have no chance of being heard; and to talk to lawyers of moral juſtice, would be like talking to hypocrites of ſincerity. In both caſes, the underſtanding, ſuch as it is, is enliſted on the ſide of error; and the apparent advantages are ſo much in their favour, that no eloquence could perſuade them that truth is preferable to artifice, and ſincerity to hypocriſy. We might ſooner lead wiſdom into error, than cunning into truth. Wiſdom is attended with modeſty and candour; cunning always with conceit and obſtinacy: there are moral diſeaſes in civil and religious profeſſions, which are more inveterate, and more incurable, than any profligacy, or any villainy, which is grounded merely on violent paſſions.

The diſtinctions between moral juſtice and legal juſtice, are in general, therefore, the diſtinctions between virtue and vice; and

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ſocieties, in proportion as they admit of thoſe diſtinctions, are ineffectual, and injurious to the intereſts and happineſs of mankind.

Laws, however multiplied, leave men, at leaſt in this country, conſiderable room to act from their own principles. In religion, if we are not rewarded on the largeſt and beſt principles of juſtice, we may regulate our religious connections and converſation according to thoſe principles. We are not under an abſolute neceſſity of believing what we do not underſtand, or of profeſſing what we do not believe. We are not under an abſolute neceſſity of being unjuſt, uncharitable, and injurious to thoſe who differ from us in opinion. Hypocriſy is not now the beſt mean to obtain a good name: and if we give up the deſire of riches in religion, we may be honeſt men. In trade, the temptations to injuſtice are more numerous, and the opportunities more alluring. To the character of an honeſt man, even in buſineſs, it ought to be neceſſary, that he ſhould not only avoid practices for which he would be puniſhed; but that he ſhould deal for reaſonable and moderate profits; and that he ſhould ſuffer thoſe whom he employs, to live, nay, to proſper, as much as poſſible by his means. In domeſtic life, it is not only neceſſary that a man and wife ſhould avoid actions which are ſcandalous and illegal; but they ſhould obſerve that they have rules of juſtice, cogniſable only to nature and God, who will infallibly make them happy or miſerable, as they obſerve or tranſgreſs them. No expedient in all nature can avert the puniſhment of an injudicious, an intereſted, or a wicked choice. All the duties, and all the happineſs of a married life, are founded on mutual preference and affection; and the juſtice, fidelity, and honour,

nour, required in it, is the firſt and moſt important obligation of human nature. This connection is the firſt, great, and delightful link, that unites us in ſociety, and produces a pure happineſs, almoſt unknown to the brutality and profligacy of modern manners. In the government of children, and their ſettlement in life, we are ſtrictly bound by the obligations of juſtice, not only to avoid blame, and to act by cuſtom; but to recollect our own youth; and, allowing merely for errors in judgment, to take our former inclinations for our rules; and to do by them as we would have been done by. This would prevent the daily ſacrifices which are made of innocence to avarice, and put an end to that legal proſtitution, under the ſanction of parental tyranny, of law, and of religion, which is the cauſe of almoſt every other ſpecies of proſtitution.

Maſters, in their conduct to ſervants, and ſervants to maſters, ſhould have an eye to this natural and moral juſtice, without which they will not diſcharge their duties. The expectation of the maſter ſhould be reaſonable and humane; and the ſervice of the ſervant ſhould be faithful, and to the utmoſt of his power. That maſter is not juſt, who, while he pays his ſervant's wages, injures his morals, or makes him wretched: and that ſervant is unjuſt, while he refrains from ſtealing and waſte, and does what he is commanded, who is inattentive to his maſter's welfare, and negligent either of his property or of his happineſs.

In all theſe caſes, the rule given in the words prefixed to this lecture, is the beſt general one that can well be imagined.—"As ye "would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye alſo unto them."

LECTURE XXV.

HUMANITY. PART I.

Having compaſſion one of another—Love as brethren—Be pitiful.

THERE is no view of the divine government ſo juſt, and ſo pleaſing, as that which repreſents the univerſe in the circumſtances of a family, and all its inhabitants as brothers and ſiſters.

That narrow line, which ſtrict juſtice traces for perfect beings; that exact obſervance of all obligations, which is the price of univerſal happineſs, is not to be expected from human nature. Juſtice, therefore, while reaſon is obliged to acknowledge its claims, is contemplated with a kind of awe, and with ſome degree of deſpair. The diſpoſitions of the human mind are wonderful objects of philoſophical attention; the origin of its paſſions, and the occaſional production of principles, to counteract the effects even of its errors and vices. If the obligations of juſtice were univerſally diſcharged, univerſal order, virtue, and happineſs would be the conſequences. But as this is not the caſe, proviſions are made by the wiſdom and goodneſs of God; ſo that, as errors and vices ariſe, they cannot fail to be accompanied

panied with, and even to produce, virtues, which will obviate their inconveniencies. Thus, injuſtice and cruelty produce humanity and compaſſion; which, it is to be hoped, do more than barely atone for their inconveniencies. And thus, while moral agents fail in their duties, which are the direct ſources of general felicity, the goodneſs of God has provided that the deduction from the happineſs of the world, ſhall not be in ſtrict proportion to the vices of its inhabitants; and that thoſe humane and gentle diſpoſitions, thoſe extraordinary efforts of ſelf-denial, generoſity, and compaſſion, which are the offspring of imperfection and diſorder, ſhould make us ſome amends for all the evils they occaſion.

In conſidering the duties of juſtice we have been obliged to keep our ideas above the common ſphere of human practice. In conſidering the diſpoſitions of humanity and compaſſion, we enter into the tendereſt intereſts, and moſt important tranſactions of men's lives. We will not ſtop, therefore, to ſpeculate on thoſe opinions both of ancient and modern philoſophers; which have been advanced to diſcredit theſe virtues, and repreſented them as follies, becauſe they originated in imperfections. We are converſant about what is, and not always what ought to be; and, in proportion as our views of things grow more enlarged and accurate, we ſee reaſon to ſuppoſe, that, what is is beſt. It would be improper, on many accounts, to ſay, that the imperfections and vices of men, while they occaſion partial inconveniencies and miſeries, do not leſſen the general happineſs; becauſe we have not abilities and knowledge enough to

decide on this ſubject: but while we owe to errors the production of virtues, which could otherwiſe have no exiſtence; while we feel, in the offices of humanity and compaſſion, pleaſures, at leaſt, equal to thoſe which ariſe from acts of ſtrict juſtice; pleaſures, which our hearts, our judgments, and our underſtandings approve of and applaud; we will not diſpute with men about their origin: it is well if we refrain from aſſerting that the ſum of happineſs enjoyed by the univerſe is greater than it could have been, if no errors and vices had been admitted into it.—But we muſt not, even in praiſing God, ſeem to be apologiſts for vice. He will take care of the univerſe, in which he can have no aſſiſtance from our crude and ridiculous ſpeculations. Whatever remedies he may have allowed us for our imperfections and faults; whatever uſe he may make of them, in thoſe large and univerſal arrangements, of which we have no knowledge or comprehenſion, he has taught us to ſhun and abhor errors and vices, as deſtructive of our intereſts and happineſs.

Humanity ſeems to be a delegate of ſtrict and perfect juſtice; the neceſſity of which ariſes from our imperfections and faults: or, to define it more truly and philoſophically, it is that kind and candid principle, produced by the experience we have had of miſery, inclining us to allow for the failings, and to relieve the diſtreſſes, of others. There is no principle perhaps ſo generally uſeful and important in our tranſactions with each other; and it is therefore very properly called humanity. The character and uſefulneſs of a man; the benefit and pleaſure which he can be of to his acquaintance, greatly depend on the manner in which it is formed. The experience of pain will produce

duce an idea of pain in every mind; but humanity is produced by an additional idea; by an habitual recollection, that all men are formed as we are, and feel as we do. This virtue depends on the truth and juſtneſs of our ſenſibility, and the promptitude and vigour of our imaginations: and we may obſerve, that men of heavy unfeeling frames, and of ſlow and ſluggiſh imaginations, are almoſt wholly deſtitute of it. Men of tender, irritable frames, whoſe fancies are ever on the wing, have violent, exceſſive, but ſhort and uncertain, fits of this virtue. The ſenſibility ſhould be of that manly ſort, which feels all things, without being convulſed by the moſt violent affections; and which retains impreſſions, without being overwhelmed by them. The imagination ſhould be quick and lively; but poſſeſſing that degree of temper and firmneſs, without which no juſt and uſeful compariſons can be made between the caſes which are in us occaſions of patience; and when they happen to others, render them the objects of our humanity and compaſſion.

The importance of forming the ſenſibility on a juſt, extenſive, and accurate experience; and of exercifing the imagination, ſo as to give it real and uniform vigour, we have already conſidered, on a general view of the ſubject. The truths which were then advanced may be recollected, and perhaps better underſtood, on being applied to a particular duty.

A juſt and uſeful humanity is removed, on the one hand, from inſenſibility, and on the other from ſentimental weakneſs; from what is called exceſſive ſenſibility; and from an incapacity to bear the accident of life, or to aſſiſt ohers under them.

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In vicious ſocieties, men are divided into two claſſes; the firſt, and moſt conſiderable, is formed by thoſe whom a negligent and brutiſh education have rendered ſtupid and inſenſible. The experience they have had of pain has produced a calloufneſs, which fits them well for the wind and weather of modern political and moral regions; renders them proper ſubjects of bad governments; where a juſt and well-formed ſenſibility would oblige them either to effect their deliverance or their deſtruction. In theſe we ſeldom look for humanity. Indeed, men in general lay no claim to this virtue. It is left to choice characters, or it is conſidered as the affectation of imprudence and folly. Men, whoſe ſenſe of moral pleaſure and pain has not been formed with care and judgment; men whoſe early ſufferings have been directed to no end, and who have been rendered ſtupid by the very means which ſhould have made them ſenſible and intelligent, cannot poſſeſs a virtue, which owes its exiſtence to a juſt and exquiſite ſenſibility, united to a vigorous and excellent imagination. Where theſe are wanting, or are defective, this virtue is alſo wanting, or is defective. A man, to be humane, ſhould feel his own pains and miſeries ſo as to endeavour to avoid them; and his imagination ſhould be capable of running over all the various ſimilitudes, and degrees of ſimilitude, which may ariſe between the pains and ſuffering of others and his own. In proportion as a man poſſeſſes his natural feelings, and is capable, with promptneſs, celerity, and truth, as occaſions ariſe, to make juſt compariſons of his own with thoſe of others, in that proportion only can he be humane. We ſee the reaſons, therefore, why the generality of men are inhumane; and why, amongſt them,

them, while numbers can keep each other in countenance, want of humanity is no great reproach. We muſt not wonder, then, that, in the tendereſt connections of life, men are daily committing inhuman actions. The father, who may have been puniſhed, according to the ſavage forms of modern education, till his mind is covered, as with a coat of mail; and who is ſent into the world with the diſpoſitions of a brute, will very naturally have no humanity, in our ſenſe of the word; and though he loves his own child, as well as he can love any thing but himſelf, he very calmly and deliberately ſends him to undergo what he has forgotten.

All the ſpecies of tyranny exerciſed in domeſtic life, and they are very numerous, are owing to this cauſe. The government of children, in thoſe families where they are at all governed, is generally conducted on ſummary and tyrannic principles. All the inclinations, views, and deſigns, of thoſe who are fit to entertain any, are to be regulated by the avarice or ambition of the head whoſe ſenſibility is totally blunted, and whoſe mind is not only incapable of comparing its ideas and feelings with thoſe of his children; but has intirely loſt all recollection of them. Do not miſtake me—I am not pleading the cauſe of licentiouſneſs and undutifulneſs. I have no motive to it; for I am a father myſelf; and if I have an undutiful child, it will be of my own forming. There is an amiable ductility in youth, which nothing but paternal cruelty or negligence can drive into undutifulneſs. And if you contemplate the families of your acquaintance, I am ſure you cannot wonder at the licentiouſneſs

of youth. This is only aſſigning a cauſe; it is not making an apology, for any irregularity in the conduct of young people. I know nothing that reflects ſo much honour on human nature, as the infinite reluctance with which young minds are ruined by the ſyſtems, regulations, and deſigns of their parents.

The beſt apology for this is, that it muſt be owing to that ſtupid inſenſibility, that want of the power and habit of comparing our own feelings and ideas with thoſe of others, which is the general cauſe of inhumanity.

Though the conduct of unnatural and undutiful children may be accounted for; yet it ſeems more deteſtable than that of parents; becauſe there are hardly any inſtances, in which the latter do not blend kindneſs with injury, and indulgent intentions with ſelfiſh and cruel ones. Nay, it very often happens, that all the errors, and all the inhumanities, in the conduct of parents, are owing to miſtaken fondneſs, and an ill-directed deſire to make their offspring great and happy. The inattention of youth to the deſigns, purpoſes, and inclinations of their parents, is a ſpecies of inhumanity much aggravated by ingratitude; and daily occaſions the moſt affecting ſcenes of wretchedneſs and miſery, which are exhibited in human life. We are not reconciled to them even by their numbers; and that mind muſt be abandoned, who can ſee, without anguiſh, an aged father or mother breathing only ſighs for the moſt affecting diſappointments; deſerted, neglected, ill-uſed, conſidered as an incumbrance

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on the family property, and even wiſhed out of life, by their own offspring.

We can only, at this time, open a partial view of the ſubject under conſideration; we may proceed further on another occaſion.

LECTURE XXVI.

HUMANITY. PART II.

Having compaſſion one of another—Love as brethren—Be pitiful.

WE have already traced the diſpoſition to humanity and compaſſion into its origin in a well-formed ſenſibility, united to an extenſive and prompt imagination. It is neceſſary thus to trace the diſpoſitions of the human mind to their ſources; for it is there alone any of their defects and faults are certainly and eaſily to be remedied. But this requires more knowledge, more ſtrength and application of mind, than to make the diſcoveries even of a Newton, or to acquire the moſt certain and ſplendid fame, by aſtoniſhing reſearches in any of the amuſing ſciences. The ſcience of morals, as it is the moſt important, is the moſt difficult of all ſciences—Indeed, all others are valuable only as they aſſiſt to throw light on it. Thoſe perſons, therefore, are extremely ignorant of the real principles of morality, and the great art of making men virtuous and happy, who affect to treat it as a ſubject intuitively obvious to every mind, and requiring no inveſtigation, and no exerciſe of the underſtanding. It is the extreme difficulty attending this moſt extenſive and moſt

moſt important of all ſubjects; that makes men give up the ſtudy of it, and turn their minds into thoſe narrow channels, which are called the ſciences; and which, inſtead of tending to morality, as to a common and uſeful center, often diverge from each other, in various and infinite directions, and multiply the doubts, the confuſions, the vices, and the miſeries of the world. I have endeavoured to render theſe lectures philoſophical diſquiſitions, from a ſincere conviction, that no other diſcourſes can be of any uſe. To tell men that they muſt be virtuous, or they will be damned in this world, and in that which is to come, may have an effect, in proportion to the eloquence and force with which it is ſaid; but I doubt much whether even ſuch aſſertions, made at random, without aſſigning reaſons, and ſhewing the connection of cauſes and effects, do not, in fact, more real injury than ſervice to mankind. Until morality be the univerſal ſcience of man, the ultimate view of all his learning and all his knowledge, it will never be underſtood: the world will continue, as it is, under the direction of a vain, ill-grounded philoſophy, a ſuperſtitious religion, bad policy, and brutal paſſions—a ſcene of vicious confuſion, and complicated miſery. It would be eaſier for me to exhibit ſpecimens of fine writing and pathetic eloquence, on the ſubject of humanity, than to ſhew you how the diſpoſition is formed; how it is loſt; and how it may be in ſome meaſure recovered. In the firſt method, every public ſpeaker, of any tolerable abilities, with the aſſiſtance of orators, poets, and ſentimental writers, might affect and pleaſe and gain every advantage he would wiſh to himſelf; but he could do hardly any good. In the

latter, he would find it difficult to engage his hearers to accompany him in enquiries, which all men, learned and unlearned, decline, on account of their difficulty; and where he may expoſe the weakneſs of thoſe abilities, which might have given him eternal fame, if they had been employed in the cloudy and futile regions of vulgar philoſophy. If the immortal Newton, who delineated and fixed the laws of matter and motion, foretold eclipſes, and purſued the tracks of comets in the regions of infinite ſpace: if he had been aſked to point out the laws, equally certain, and infinitely more uſeful to men, by which their diſpoſitions and virtues were formed—he would, either from ignorance, have denied the exiſtence of thoſe laws; or his great and aſtoniſhing mind would have ſeen and acknowledged the extenſiveneſs and variety of the ſubject; to which all other ſciences are either trifles, or they are uſeful and leading ſteps. If we would wiſh to be happy, we muſt conſider morality—not as a matter of ſentiment—not to be produced in us by eloquence, by advice, or by menaces—it is the general reſult of a mental conſtitution, more exquiſitely, and as ſcientifically, formed, as the ſun and moon and ſtars; as herbs and flowers and trees; metals, minerals, and ſtones; fire, air, and water; which are the common objects of philoſophical diſquiſition.

With theſe ſentiments I muſt proceed, as I have begun, and continue to treat morality as the higheſt, moſt important, and moſt difficult, of all the ſciences.

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The inſenſibility, and that ſluggiſh, heavy, and undiſtinguiſhing imagination, which we ſee generally produced by the common education of men, is the general reaſon that we find them deſtitute of humanity. We have already conſidered this part of the ſubject; and ſeen, that from an incapacity of feeling as others do, and having an imagination, which could not, in the time uſually allowed for ſuch proceſſes, compare their feelings with thoſe of others, they have not even the appearance of the virtue of humanity.

Oppoſite to this extreme lies another, produced by meaſures equally injudicious, and equally injurious to the happineſs of the world; *i. e.* a relaxed, enfeebled, and irritable ſtate f the mind, which is ever attended by a lively, but injudicious, imagination. There is no problem in morality, and it abounds with many more than mathematics, which ſeems at firſt more difficult than the following:—That perſons, whoſe minds are ſuſceptible of the moſt exquiſite impreſſions from any thing diſagreeable and painful, and whoſe imaginations draw compariſons with aſtoniſhing rapidity, and with aggravations in favour of the wretched, are yet remarkably defective in humanity; nay, are capable of, and are known daily to commit, the moſt inhuman and moſt cruel actions. Turn your attention to your ſeveral acquaintance; chuſe from among them thoſe whoſe minds are moſt intolerable in their ſenſibilities; who expire at circumſtances which common minds juſt feel; and whoſe imaginations paint horrors, where nature hardly knows diſtreſs:—if you produce one of theſe ſentimental perſons, the very common produce of modern

dern nurſing and modern reading, who are good for any thing, as fathers, mothers, brothers, and ſiſters; nay, who are not remarkable for acts of inhumanity and cruelty—you will exhibit a greater prodigy than has been hitherto ever ſeen in the moral world.

The reaſon of this is alſo obvious; but not ſufficiently attended to, by thoſe who have the care of young people; and who often injure them, by the very means which they ſincerely intend for their benefit.

Tenderneſs and weakneſs of mind are produced exactly as tenderneſs and weakneſs of body. A man is rendered miſerable for life, by the neceſſary and ſalutary variations of the weather, who, in infancy and youth, has been unuſed to bear them. Juſt ſo, the mind is incapable of bearing the common viciſſitudes of the world, which, in early life, has had no experience of them; whoſe wiſhes and caprices have been laws; and whoſe eaſe has been procured, at the expence of every thing which could be ſacrificed by his friends or his dependants. Here is evidently the double ſource, in the ſame mind, of falſe tenderneſs, and of callous inhumanity. A mental tenderneſs and debility are produced by falſe and exceſſive care; and an inhuman inattention to others, is the certain effect of ſubjecting families and ſervants to the humours and caprices of children. Here we ſee the general outline of this contradictory and deteſtable character—a ſentimental brute, as it were, in embryo!—Theſe perſons, even left to themſelves, would crawl to novels and romances,

as

as naturally as any animals do to their ſuſtenance. H re they find proper exerciſe for their ſenſibility; here their falſe humanity and pity are exhauſted; and they have nothing left for common occaſions and common life, but peeviſh and hateful diſpoſitions. The ſenſibility of theſe perſons is not formed on the true and juſt ſtandard of nature; and their imaginations, in comparing themſelves with others, find no reſemblance. It is therefore they fly out of life for ſentimental exerciſes and gratifications; and, conceiving of their fellow-creatures in general as brutes, they behave to them accordingly.

The real virtue of humanity lies between theſe two extremes, of inſenſibility and a tardy imagination on the one hand, and a relaxed, ſentimental, irritable frame, accompanied with a giddy and extravagant fancy, on the other. Men are formed ſo much alike, that the general cauſes which produce happineſs and miſery in one man, have the ſame effects in all others. This would be the ground of univerſal juſtice, if the golden age were to take place; this is the ground of humanity and compaſſion, in the preſent ſtate of mankind.

There is no circumſtance, which can ſubject one man to unhappineſs, but may ſubject another; or it may be compared with others, which may have a ſimilar effect. This has made ſome ſuperficial obſervers on the ſubject ſay, that humanity originates in ſelfiſhneſs; that we regard others in miſery, only becauſe we know we are liable to the ſame, or to a ſimilar miſery, ourſelves. Theſe philoſophers do not diſtinguiſh where there

is an obvious and important difference. We judge of the ſufferings of others, by what we feel ourſelves. But the experience we make, and the judgment we form, are operations of the mind, perfectly diſtinct from apprehenſion on our own account; and thoſe perſons are very unequal to the taſk of philoſophical diſquiſition, who cannot avoid confounding them. That men are formed alike; that they are led to miſery by the ſame cauſes, and ſuffer under it in the ſame manner, is a truth which nature and experience will teach every man; and this truth is the foundation of humanity. The ſimple fact neceſſary to be aſcertained to the mind, in order to excite the principle of humanity, is, that a ſenſible being ſuffers. For we ſee, in well-formed minds, this virtue is extended to all living creatures. A merciful man is merciful even to his beaſt. The ſufferings of every ſenſible being are matters of compaſſion to a humane mind; from an experience, indeed, which it has had of miſery; but not from the leaſt apprehenſion that it can ever be ſubject to the ſame ſufferings which it commiſerates. I inſiſt on theſe diſtinctions, which may appear trifling to haſty and ſuperficial obſervers. All errors are injurious; and theſe remote, philoſophical ones, are like ſmall clogs on the firſt ſprings of a curious machine: they may be ſeen only by an artiſt; but they affect and injure its whole movement. No man can be truly humane, who attributes, from conviction, the virtue of humanity to ſelfiſhneſs. This virtue is formed into a principle and habit in the mind, when, under the direction of wiſe and virtuous inſtructors, we have had an experience of the general cauſes of human miſery; have been taught, that all men are in purſuit of happineſs,

pineſs, as we are; and ſuffer by errors, diſappointments, injuries, and cruelties, as we do. If men would take pains with themſelves and their children, and exerciſe their imaginations in making thoſe compariſons between their feelings and thoſe of others which would make them humane and compaſſionate, we ſhould hardly have reaſon to regret that evil was admitted into the world. Thoſe harmleſs animals, which are given into our hands, and whoſe very lives are ſacrificed to ours, would have the few years of their exiſtence to ſpend in ſportiveneſs and enjoyment. They would be defended from the ferocious depredations of beaſts of prey; and that moſt ſavage of all God's creatures, a cruel man, would not then wantonly ſport with their tendereſt affections; tear the young and playful lamb from its meek and affectionate parent; or hear, with unconcern, the lowing herds bemoaning his bloody devaſtations. Negligence and unconcern, in the manner of taking off thoſe lives, which are ſubmitted to our uſe, would be unbecoming the character of men—What muſt that brutality and cruelty be, with which the butchery of harmleſs and uſeful creatures is now carried on?—The wolf, or the tyger, who inſtantly ſeizes and tears his prey, is a ſaint to all the poliſhed Chriſtians of Europe, in the manner of obtaining and uſing thoſe poor animals, which ſerve for his food.

The moſt amiable and humane of the ancient philoſophers, were ſtruck with this inhumanity in ancient manners; and they conceived an abhorrence for all methods of ſubmitting the life and blood and ſubſtance of one animal to be the food of another. This tenderneſs for animals, in all probability, gave riſe

to the doctrine of tranſmigration; for it was very natural, that thoſe amiable enthuſiaſts, who exempted them from violent death and ſuffering, ſhould give them ſouls. Pythagoras found this doctrine in the Eaſt; and as it is a ſubject interwoven with humanity, and neceſſary to be thoroughly cleared up to a truly virtuous mind, I ſhall, ſome other time, briefly ſtate thoſe reaſons which have ſatisfied my own; and without which I ſhould certainly have continued, what I once was, a thorough Pythagorean.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXVII.

HUMANITY. PART III.

Having compaſſion one of another—Love as brethren—Be pitiful.

IN the two laſt lectures, we have ſhewn how the diſpoſition to humanity is formed, by a juſt experience of pain, and by an imagination which is ready and expeditious in making a proper compariſon of what others ſuffer, from ſimilar cauſes with thoſe which may have affected us. To ſhew how a principle is formed, by what may be called the moral laws of the univerſe, is to ſhew, in the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt manner, that it is a duty. For here, if any where, we may be ſure that we are obeying the will of God. In all kinds of revelation, there is not only a poſſibility of error; but there may be reaſons or temptations to impoſture: and all traditions, all hiſtorical evidences, are at beſt liable to various uncertainties. In nature we have nothing to fear, but our own miſtakes. Here the real voice of God is undoubtedly to be heard. In ſome caſes it is immediately underſtood; in others, it requires time, attention, and induſtry. But theſe are ever in proportion to our wants; and the truths of moral philoſophy become numerous, complicated,

and difficult, only as our ſituations render them ſuch. And to inveſtigate thoſe truths, which are the immediate means of our happineſs, is our proper, and ſhould be our conſtant, employment.

When we had conſidered humanity as a duty, for the reaſon juſt mentioned, and placed it between the two extremes of inſenſibility and ſentimental weakneſs, we proceeded to delineate the conduct of a humane and compaſſionate mind. We began with the ſentiments he would entertain towards thoſe animals which ſeem to be given into his hands; and our animadverſions on the cruelty exerciſed towards them, eſpecially the wanton carnage and butchery with which we devour many of them, very naturally brought to our minds the ſentiments of the ancients on thoſe ſubjects; and particularly the extreme humanity and conſideration with which animals were treated, by all the votaries of one of the moſt extenſive and moſt ancient religions now exiſting. The religion of the Gentoos ſeems to have been the religion of the moſt poliſhed, improved, and populous of the eaſtern nations. The accounts we have of it, in its preſent ſtate of declenſion, are ſuch as engage our eſteem and reverence, though conveyed to us through very polluted channels. The followers of Brama are, for the moſt part, meek and patient ſufferers under ſavage and bigotted Mahometans; who, in their turn, are oppreſſed by cruel, though not bigotted, Chriſtians: ſo that our accounts of the Gentoos come from plunderers, who receive them from thoſe whom they immediately oppreſs, and who are the plunderers of theſe people. It requires more than mathematical

tical preciſion, to determine exactly what degree of credit ought to be given to informations thus derived. We may be well aſſured, that no miſrepreſentation takes place in favour of the ancient and oppreſſed followers of Brama.

Pythagoras ſeems to have taken from this people the principles which have diſtinguiſhed his philoſophy; and the peculiar doctrines of Pythagoras are no where better expreſſed, than in the following paſſage.

He firſt the taſte of fleſh from tables drove,
And argued well, if arguments could move—
" O, mortals! from your fellows' blood abſtain,
" Nor taint your bodies with a food profane:
" While corn and pulſe by nature are beſtowed,
" And planted orchards bend their willing load;
" While laboured gardens wholeſome herbs produce,
" And teeming vines afford their generous juice;
" Nor tardier fruits of cruder kind are loſt,
" But tamed with fire, or mellowed by the froſt;
" While kine to pails diſtended udders bring,
" And bees their honey, redolent of ſpring;
" While earth not only can your needs ſupply,
" But, laviſh of her ſtore, provides for luxury;
" A guiltleſs feaſt adminiſters with eaſe,
" And, without blood, is prodigal to pleaſe.
" Wild beaſts their maws with their ſlain brethren fill;
" And yet not all, for ſome refuſe to kill;
" Sheep, goats, and oxen, and the nobler ſteed,
" On browze and corn and flowery meadows feed.

" Bears, tygers, wolves, the lion's angry brood,
" Whom Heaven endued with principles of blood,
" He wiſely ſunder'd from the reſt, to yell
" In foreſts, and in lonely caves to dwell;
" Where ſtronger beaſts oppreſs the weak by might,
" And all in prey and purple feaſts delight.
" Oh, impious uſe! to nature's laws oppoſed,
" Where bowels are in other bowels cloſed:
" Where, fattened by their fellows' fat, they thrive;
" Maintained by murder, and by death they live.
" 'Tis then for nought, that mother Earth provides
" The ſtores of all ſhe ſhews, and all ſhe hides,
" If men with fleſhy morſels muſt be fed,
" And chew, with bloody teeth, the breathing bread;
" What elſe is this, but to devour our gueſts,
" And barbarouſly renew Cyclopean feaſts?
" We, by deſtroying life, our life ſuſtain,
" And gorge the ungodly maw with meats obſcene.

" Not ſo the golden age, who fed on fruit,
" Nor durſt with bloody meals their mouths pollute,
" Then birds in airy ſpace might ſafely move,
" And timorous hares on heaths ſecurely rove:
" Nor needed fiſh the guileful hooks to fear;
" For all was peaceful, and that peace ſincere.
" Whoever was the wretch, and curſed be he!
" That envy'd firſt our food's ſimplicity,
" Th' eſſay of bloody feaſts on brutes began,
" And after forged the ſword, to murder man.
" Had he the ſharpened ſteel alone employed
" On beaſts of prey, that other beaſts deſtroyed,

" Or

" Or man invaded with their fangs and paws,
" This had been juſtified by nature's laws,
" And ſelf-defence—But who did feaſts begin
" Of fleſh, he ſtretched neceſſity to ſin.
" To kill man-killers man has lawful power,
" But not the unextended licence to devour.
" Ill habits gather by unſeen degrees.
" As brooks make rivers, rivers run to ſeas.
" The ſow, with her broad ſnout, for rooting up
" The incruſted ſeed, was judged to ſpoil the crop,
" And interrupt the toiling farmer's hope;
" The covetous churl, of unforgiving kind,
" The offender to the bloody prieſt reſigned:
" Her hunger was no plea—for that ſhe died.
" The goat came next in order to be tried:
" The goat had cropt the tendrils of the vine:
" In vengeance laity and clergy join,
" Where one had loſt his profit, one his wine.
" Here was, at leaſt, ſome ſhadow of offence:
" The ſheep was ſacrificed on no pretence,
" But meek and unreſiſting innocence:
" A patient, uſeful creature, born to bear
" The warm and woolly fleece, that cloathed her murtherer;
" And daily to give down the milk ſhe bred,
" A tribute for the graſs on which ſhe fed.
" Living, both food and raiment ſhe ſupplies,
" And is of leaſt advantage when ſhe dies.

" How did the toiling ox his death deſerve;
" A downright ſimple drudge, and born to ſerve?
" O, tyrant! with what juſtice canſt thou hope
" The promiſe of the year, a plenteous crop;

" When

" When thou deſtroyeſt thy labouring ſteer, who till'd
" And plough'd, with pains, thy elſe ungrateful field?
" From his yet reeking neck to draw the yoke,
" That neck, with which the ſurly clods he broke;
" And to the hatchet yield thy huſbandman,
" Who finiſhed autumn, and the ſpring began!

" Nor this alone—but, Heaven itſelf to bribe,
" We to the Gods our impious acts aſcribe;
" Firſt recompenſe with death their creatures' toil,
" Then call the bleſſed above to ſhare the ſpoil:
" The faireſt victim muſt the powers appeaſe,
" So fatal 'tis ſometimes too much to pleaſe,
" A purple fillet his broad brows adorns,
" With flowery garlands crowned, and gilded horns:
" He hears the murderous prayer the prieſt prefers,
" But underſtands not 'tis his doom he hears:
" Beholds the meal betwixt his temples caſt,
" The fruit and produce of his labours paſt;
" And in the water views perhaps the knife,
" Uplifted to deprive him of his life;
" Then, broken up alive, his entrails ſees
" Torn out, for prieſts t' inſpect the Gods' decrees.

" From whence, O, mortal men! this guſt of blood
" Have you derived, and interdicted food?
" Be taught by me this dire delight to ſhun,
" Warn'd by my precepts, by my practice won:
" And when you eat the well deſerving beaſt,
" Think, on the labourer of your field you feaſt."

OVID. MET. B. 15, by DRYDEN.

I am

I am aware of a difficulty in anſwering theſe objections, which even the addreſs and eloquence of a Cicero would not ſurmount; and that ariſes from the diſpoſition of humanity, which is either well or ill-formed in every mind; and which biaſſes the judgment though not perhaps the conduct, of men, more powerfully even than intereſt. It is not poſſible for human eloquence to produce, from neceſſity and expedience, and even from a probable increaſe of happineſs, arguments that will leave the mind in a ſtate ſo pleaſingly ſatisfied, as when it is led by conviction to acquieſce in reaſons for even extreme humanity, tenderneſs, and compaſſion. This may ſtill help to define the virtue of humanity to thoſe who may not have ideas of it which are perfectly clear; and may remove all doubt of its being derived from what may be properly called ſelfiſhneſs. In humanity ſome errors ſeem more pleaſing than truth; and we are never more ſatisfied with ourſelves, than when, from the ſuggeſtions of this amiable principle, we abſtain from deeds which give others pain, even while we are induced to them by intereſt, and juſtified by reaſon.

We therefore labour, at this time, under one of thoſe difficulties which are peculiar to morals; and which, among a thouſand others, ſhew, that this ſcience is not to be thoroughly underſtood, but by the higheſt and moſt indefatigable exertions of the human underſtanding. We are reduced to the neceſſity of ſupporting the cauſe of humanity, even againſt the principle itſelf; for it can hardly ever be reconciled to thoſe actions, which ſeem neceſſary to the ſupport, and which increaſe the general happineſs, of the world.

We ſhall wave the trivial reaſons ariſing from early cuſtoms; the conſtant and uniform practice of almoſt all nations; and the rights and precepts of almoſt all religions; becauſe theſe might be alledged to juſtify any abſurdity, and any crime: and ſuch reaſons would only teize and irritate men of intelligent and feeling minds.

There ſeems to be a ſcale in nature, on which there are degrees, from inanimate matter, to the higheſt and moſt perfect intelligence. The plant lives on the ſoil; the animal, moſt ſimply and rudely organiſed, lives on the plant, and in his turn becomes food for an animal better organiſed, and of more intelligence. This deſign of nature, evident at firſt only by the neceſſities and inclinations of men, is demonſtrated, as all natural truths are, by philoſophy, and by the reflections of reaſon on its principles and laws. All the genuine ſciences are the handmaids of morality. The ſmall progreſs which anatomy and phyſic have made in diſcovering the ſtructure, conformation, nouriſhment and growth of vegetables and animals, throws light on this ſubject. Vegetables are formed by nature to draw their ſubſiſtence from the ſoil; the lower animals have a capacity of receiving that quantity of vegetables which will ſerve to nouriſh them; and their ſtructure and diſpoſition, which is the effect of that ſtructure, almoſt invariably leads them to ſeek the nouriſhment which nature provided. Higher animals, whoſe organiſation is more complicated, and who partake of various degrees of intelligence, are as evidently formed by nature to feed on lower animals, as thoſe lower animals on herbs and fruits. They are armed by nature to kill them; their capacity of

receiving food in quantity, is not ſufficient to derive their ſuſtenance from vegetables; and their very intelligence ſeems to require for its ſupport different materials, or materials better prepared, than thoſe which ſerve to give mere animal life. The lower animals are therefore as evidently deſigned for the food of the higher, as vegetables are deſigned for their food. This truth, for we ſhall now venture to call it ſo, is rendered more ſatisfactory, on a view of thoſe ſocieties, where the falſe, but pleaſing, deluſions of Brama and Pythagoras prevail, compared with others, where the principles of nature are even rudely and imperfectly obſerved. The ſtate of cultivation; the condition and number of the lower animals; and the ſtrength, uſefulneſs, and intelligence of man, are circumſtances, which, in all the dominions of the Gentoos, will not bear a compariſon with ſimilar ones in thoſe countries where animals live on vegetables, and men live on animals. The country lies uncultivated, except only for the bare ſuſtenance of a poor, harmleſs indeed, but almoſt unintelligent creature, which bears the form of man. The lower animals, not having the art of cultivation, and evidently not deſigned to take care of themſelves, are few, nearly famiſhed, and can hardly be ſaid to live. In European nations, matter goes gradually through its ſeveral preparations, till it produces the intelligence of man; who is properly employed in cultivating the earth, for the ſuſtenance of thoſe creatures which are his ſupport. By his care they are infinitely multiplied in their numbers; they are kept diſtinct; ſecured from injuries; provided with ſufficient food; and might, with a little attention, be made as happy as they are capable of being. Here we come on ground, where even humanity will aſſiſt us. For

if we ſee clearly that the care of man is extended to animals, in conſequence of his uſe of them for food; that his care only can ſecure them from the more cruel uſage of other beaſts; can provide for their wants, and put them in ſituations of enjoyment and happineſs—here humanity pleads in conjunction with reaſon; and, for the ſake of multiplying the number of living creatures, and thereby encreaſing the general ſum of happineſs in the world, it is reconciled to what at firſt appears inhuman, ſubmitting the life of one animal to another.

We are thus returned to that part of the ſubject, where the falſe humanity of the Pythagorean ſyſtem took us a little out of the way. It deſerves our conſideration, as it is one of thoſe amiable errors, which ſeems to be attended with inconveniencies rather than vices; and which, like ſome exceſſes of tender paſſions, delight and faſcinate, while they miſlead and injure us. This is not the only caſe where reaſon, and even a well-formed ſenſibility, have a difficulty of adjuſting matters; and that man alone can be happy, who does not ſacrifice the one to the other—either his ſenſibility to his reaſon, or his reaſon to his ſenſibility. It is with difficulty, and it ought to be with difficulty, that we bring our minds to bear the killing of animals for our food; and the very reaſons which we ſubmit to, are reaſons for our humanity in the treatment of them; in the care we take of their ſuſtenance; in the regard we ſhew to their affections and attachments; an in the manner we take away their lives. No perſon will be regardleſs of theſe attentions, or ſneer at the mention of them, who is not, in intelligence and feeling, more

a brute

a brute than a man. Where pain and pleaſure, happineſs and miſery, are concerned, there the obligations of morality are alſo concerned; and a man who is not merciful to the animals in his power, whatever his pretenſions may be to reaſon and religion, is, in truth, of a narrow underſtanding, and of a bad heart. What ſhall we ſay, then, of that morality, that religion, and that policy, which admits of the cruelties we ſee daily exerciſed on creatures, we derive benefit and pleaſure from every moment of our lives?——Circumſtances of injury and cruelty are added to the neceſſity of taking away their lives, the relation of which would make you ſhudder. Theſe things, whatever we may ſay of our knowledge and holineſs, are indiſputable remains of our ancient barbariſm; for we may point out among thoſe who prepare our food in its ſeveral ſtages, perſons, who are further removed from thoſe virtues which adorn a man, than any ſavages on the face of the earth:—thoſe who ſacrifice every feeling and conſideration for miſery, to a ſmall or imaginary difference in taſte; and who will direct or ſuffer a ſenſible being to be broiled, by ſlow gradations, out of its life, for the chance of adding to the reliſh of eating it, is of a worſe diſpoſition than a tyger or a wolf, though he may have the form of a man, and be cloathed in purple and fine linen.

The ſame inhumanity diſgraces our age and principles in regard to thoſe animals which aſſiſt our labour, relieve our fatigues, and contribute to our pleaſures. They are often committed into the hands of men, who ſeem to be actually inferior to them in every quality, both of mind and body. No perſon,

ſon, who could diveſt himſelf of the prejudices attached to outward form, upon being ſhewn an animal, caſt in one of the moſt beautiful molds of nature; docile, apprehenſive, intelligent; faithful, chearful, and generous in his ſervices—at the ſame time being ſhewn a brute in human form, who is the delegate of avaricious cruelty, in extorting his utmoſt ſervices. If he were impartially to attend to the whole conduct of the one, and the whole converſation and conduct of the other, and were told, that one of them had an intelligent immortal ſoul, deſigned for virtue and happineſs here and in heaven; and that the other would terminate his exiſtence with this life—he would certainly imagine the horſe to be the immortal being; and the man too well rewarded by the grave or annihilation. The remains of barbarity, which ſtill continue, in our treatment of animals, are a reproach to our natures; to all our moral, philoſophical, and religious pretenſions; and to thoſe forms of government and principles of police, which we ignorantly and vainly extol, as the moſt excellent and perfect which can be imagined.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXVIII.

HUMANITY. PART IV.

Having compaſſion one of another—Love as brethren—Be pitiful.

AFTFR having defined the nature of humanity, and deſcribed ſome of the effects of it, in our treatment of thoſe inferior animals, which have been put in our power; which leſſen our labour, and ſupport our lives: we may very properly conclude our obſervations, on this ſubject, with thoſe duties, of men to men, which have given this diſpoſition the title of humanity.

The Apoſtle has, in the words we have read, very properly annexed pity to the love of mankind: as it ever prevails in the human breaſt, according as it is accompanied with benevolence; and humanity is leſſened, injured, and deſtroyed, by the ſame cauſes which have an effect on our love of mankind.

In the laſt lecture, our attention was turned to ſome conſiderations, which ſhould make us humane to thoſe creatures, whoſe ſenſe of miſery bears but a ſmall proportion to that of the human mind; and who, in loſing their happineſs, loſe but little,

when

when compared with that of man. Our hearts, however, muſt have felt a regret at the enumeration of ſome of thoſe circumſtances of cruelty, with which harmleſs, uſeful animals are treated, and the ſavage inattention and barbarity, with which men employ and devour them. What are theſe, to the ſentiments that muſt affect us, when we recollect, that men, united to each other by nature, affection, and intereſt; men, whoſe ſenſe of happineſs and miſery is the moſt lively and exquiſite; and who cannot hurt others, without injuring themſelves: that they very generally forget the pleaſing and neceſſary duties of humanity; and almoſt literally bite and devour one another. Though cruelty to brutes appears to us deteſtable, on a conſiderate view of it; yet it is not ſo unnatural, not ſo deteſtable, as what may be properly called inhumanity. They are put in our power; and one of the firſt and eaſieſt corruptions of nature, is the abuſe of power. We have an intereſt in making the utmoſt uſe of them; and intereſt almoſt always becomes avarice: we therefore do not wonder that theſe poor creatures are put to their utmoſt ſervices. In taking away their lives, our very ſenſibility is a collateral cauſe of our cruelty. The act itſelf is an act of violence; it is attended with precipitation, to ſave uneaſineſs to ourſelves; and we are often cruel, to be expeditious. To ſave ourſelves pain, from the feelings of compaſſion, we commit the offices of blood into the hands of a ſet of men, who are educated to inhumanity, and whoſe ſenſibility has been blunted and deſtroyed, by early habits and practice. Thus we increaſe miſery, in order to avoid the ſight of it; and becauſe we cannot bear being apparently cruel ourſelves, or to commit thoſe neceſſary

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actions which are attended with pain to other creatures, we ſuffer that pain to be increaſed, by commiſſioning others to perform them, who ſeem to delight in cruelty, and to ſport and play with miſery.

If that morality, that religion, and that policy, which admits of cruelty to the lower animals, be reproachable and unworthy of man, what ſhall we ſay, upon opening the large catalogue of human miſeries, which it is the province of humanity to alleviate or to remove?

Miſery is the conſequence of vice; and vice originates in error, or in thoſe perverted principles and habits, which have been owing to error. This is a general definition of human unhappineſs. Ill health, poverty, wretchedneſs, and misfortunes, which ſeem to have no dependence on our moral character, generally have a dependence and connection, either immediately on ourſelves, or remotely and diſtantly, by means of our relations, families, and the civil ſocieties to which we belong. Every particle of matter in the natural world, obeys the laws impreſſed on it; and every diſpoſition and principle in the moral, might appear to us to have its effect in producing harmony and happineſs, but for the errors of moral agents. It is difficult to trace every moral effect to all its cauſes: man, as an intelligent and ſocial being, is continually offering problems to the underſtanding, in compariſon of which, logarithms and fluxions are children's amuſements. This is the reaſon, why, in debilitated and degenerated periods of ſocieties, men deſert the ſcience of morals; which is the baſis on which every valuable con-

nection, every excellent civil government, and every poſſible inſtitution, important to the happineſs of man, is founded: for thoſe purſuits, which are called the ſciences, and which are often of no other uſe, than to give harmleſs employment to thoſe inferior minds, which have juſt activity enough to wiſh employment without fatigue, and without danger; but would be frightened at the inveſtigations, principles, and conduct of a Socrates or a Cato. But of this matter another time. What we have to conſider now is, that though we may not be able, from ignorance, from the very little progreſs which is made in real philoſophy, to account for all the accidents of life from moral cauſes; yet we may be aſſured it is a truth, that they are thus to be accounted for: as firmly aſſured, as we can be of any thing depending on reaſon and analogy. This is to be conſidered, as it is truly, a reaſon for humanity; and not, as it is commonly alledged, for inattention and ſeverity. The euſtom of men is, when they trace a misfortune to an error, or a fault, to acquieſce in the juſtice of inflicting the misfortune: the wretch who ſuffers under it is no longer an object of compaſſion; for they can ſee the connection of cauſe and effect in his caſe; and he is, as he ought to be, miſerable, from his own miſtake and miſconduct. God help us! what children we are, at beſt, in all our imagined wiſdom, and in all our moral determinations!—When we ſee the cauſes of a wretch's miſery, and thoſe cauſes, perhaps, in poſſeſſion of his mind, we leave him to them without concern; and when we do not ſee thoſe cauſes, and cannot gueſs at them, we ſuppoſe he is the involuntary victim of the elements, of fate, of heaven, or of hell; and we very wiſely and heroically ſet ourſelves againſt theſe inviſible

viſible powers; ſympathiſe with the diſtreſſed, and make his cauſe our own. This is the foundation of what is commonly called humanity, in all the morality, and under all the forms of religion now exiſting. And this is the reaſon why the ſpurious virtue, ſo denominated, is ſo ſeldom found, ſo little to be depended upon, and ſo ineffectual. The progreſs of knowledge, which ought to be, and is, in truth, the progreſs of virtue; and the experience and prudence of age, which muſt be favourable to any real virtue, are unfavourable to this pretended one. In proportion as we advance in years, knowledge, and experience; and become acquainted with the real cauſes of men's miſeries; in that proportion we contract and harden our minds, and generally go to our graves very knowing, very cunning, and difficult to be impoſed upon; but abſolutely inhuman and worthleſs in our diſpoſitions. This is an evil of ſerious importance; as are all thoſe which accompany our firſt moral principles and habits. The difference is of the utmoſt conſequence, between any pretended virtue, originating in error, and a real virtue, ariſing from truth. Real humanity ariſes, not from an ignorance of the cauſes of misfortune and miſery; but a knowledge of them. What is commonly called humanity is a ſpecies of ſelfiſhneſs. It ariſes from an apprehenſion, that the powers of either heaven or hell are leagued againſt us; that men are oppreſſed by cauſes which they cannot remove; it is therefore a common intereſt to reſiſt them. When one ſuffers, all are alarmed; becauſe all are apprehenſive of danger; and one man flies to the aſſiſtance of another, becauſe he knows not what moment he may fall into the ſame himſelf. The conſequence of this is, beſides what we

have already taken notice of in the effects of age and knowledge, that men confine their humanity to a ſmall number of objects, and thoſe often not the moſt proper; that when, by conſtitution, circumſtances, rank and fortune, they apprehend themſelves out of danger, they become inattentive to their fellow-creatures, and inhuman in their diſpoſitions: for all their virtue depends on the nature and degree of their apprehenſions, in regard to their own danger, from unknown and inviſible cauſes. To have the ſtreams clear, it is neceſſary the ſources ſhould be ſo. Our beſt intended virtues are not of much uſe, and attended with but little pleaſure, when they are founded on miſapprehenſions and miſtakes. We ſee that humanity, ariſing merely from apprehenſion of danger, is of very little extent; very little to be depended upon; diminiſhed by knowledge, experience, and age. Real humanity, on the contrary, ariſing from the experience we ourſelves have had of miſery and its cauſes, is deſigned to be an univerſal and certain principle; for it ever accompanies that general benevolence, which is produced by a ſimilitude of minds, ſituations, bleſſings, and ſufferings; and knowledge and experience, and age improve and heighten it. A man, who has been accuſtomed to attend to thoſe cauſes of his own ſufferings which he can obſerve, will be truly candid and humane on the failings and misfortunes of others. He will ſee that different cauſes will have different effects; and that, while ſome, which he cannot wholly counteract, are driving him into numerous little deviations, another man is more unfortunate in his conſtitution, in his education, or in ſome circumſtances, which influence him to more injurious and infamous actions. Indeed

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the operations of vicious cauſes, whether immediate or remote, are ſo unnatural, ſo injurious, and the danger from them to ſociety is ſo great and inſtantaneous, that a combination of feelings in us are wiſely formed into an active principle, called anger, or hatred: but, in every good mind, this is directed to the crime, and not to the criminal; and it is natural to humanity, while it admits a man to be puniſhed, and admits of hatred for his crime, to feel a tenderneſs and regret for his ſufferings. If we are ſorry to ſee blaſted, and to be obliged to cut down, a flower, or a tree, whoſe beauty has pleaſed, or whoſe ſhade and fruit have delighted us; how much more to ſee the moſt beautiful and uſeful of God's works, the human mind, perverted, vitiated, blaſted, and under a neceſſity of being forced out of the world!— A man, whoſe humanity, in all ſuch caſes, is ſunk in his juſtice, does not poſſeſs the genuine virtue; he is deceived by the ſpurious one, which is never affected, but by the apprehenſion of danger to himſelf. In all the various caſes of human miſery, ariſing from known and apparent errors, humanity is converſant only with the ſufferings from them; the buſineſs of prevention, cure, judgment, or puniſhment, belongs to other principles.— That man, who truly loves his brethren, ſympathiſes with their diſtreſſes, and pities their miſeries, whatever be the cauſes of them.

But if this be the caſe, where vices, where the laws and intereſts of ſociety, require the effects of our angry paſſions to take place; what muſt be the caſe, when innocence ſuffers under oppreſſion, or is betrayed by artifice; when poverty, ſickneſs, and wretchedneſs, are the lots of childhood, or of decrepid age; when the utmoſt induſtry of an honeſt man cannot maintain thoſe who depend

depend on him, and a numerous helpleſs family, whom he loves, pine in want before him?—The miſeries of human life are without number—bleſſed are thoſe who ſeek them out, and are fortunate enough to relieve them!—This amiable principle is deſigned by a good God to be that relief: and if it were truly underſtood, and properly cultivated; though vices and errors and miſeries would viſit the world; yet the whole of human life would have a ſoft and meliorating ſhade thrown over it, which would make it, on the whole, the habitation of peace and happineſs. The ignorance of one man would be aſſiſted by the knowledge of another; health would chearfully adminiſter to the relief of ſickneſs; plenty to want; ſtrength to weakneſs; and joy to ſorrow: for we ſhould all be brethren. Ranks and orders and degrees of elevation in ſociety would take place, according to the variety of our talents; but, inſtead of being the occaſions of multiplying miſery, they would be the means of leſſening it. For if men were actuated by this principle, acceſſions of power and wealth would be acceſſions of duties; pleaſing, indeed, in the performance; but very numerous, and of very ſerious obligation. This is one reaſon, that ſo few among the great may be ſaid to be humane; and that all kinds of wretchedneſs diſgrace the world; while a few ignorant and vicious inhabitants of it engroſs the means of removing them. Kings and princes are almoſt neceſſarily ferocious and brutal; they are brought up apart from mankind; know little of them; and cannot love them. All the orders of the rich and great, partake, in different degrees, of this inconvenience; and if any thing like an obligation to kindneſs, and the love of mankind, occurs to them, the imagination of a lord preſents nothing to him but a lord; and that of a rich man

nothing

nothing but the rich. They will give money, and will perform temporary acts of generosity, out of vanity, superstition, and other causes of such a nature: but a rich or a great man, who truly loved mankind, as such, with a regard only to their qualities, and the experience he has had of them, would be rather a phenomenon, in the present state of society. Temporary advantages may arise from the affectation of humanity, which is assumed on various accounts; but some of the common acts of charity, which are so much the boast of our times, performed without principle, and without judgment, are immoral actions; and will be cursed by posterity, when all their consequences are fully seen, as the most inhuman actions, which could well have been committed.

The great object of our attention is——that our principle be right; then all the actions which flow from it can hardly ever be essentially wrong. Let the knowledge we have of ourselves produce in us an unbounded candour, as to the errors of others; and the experience we have had, make us ever alive to their sufferings and pains. When they are miserable, let us fly to their relief; when they are sick, let us help them; when they are poor, let us share with them the blessings we have; when they are ignorant, let us instruct them; and when beyond our power to assist, let us sympathise with them—because we are brethren—because we sincerely love one another—and every man is happy in the happiness of those he loves. Wisdom then would be no longer a temptation to artifice; power would never oppress; and riches, instead of being the bane and curse of the world, would heighten and multiply its happiness.

LECTURE XXIX.

BENEFICENCE. PART I.

Let us do good unto all men.

SUCH is the preſent ſtate of morality, both in the minds and conduct of men; ſo confuſed and imperfect are their apprehenſions of its real principles and obligations; that the plaineſt duty is involved in difficulties; controverted; driven by ſophiſtry out of ſyſtems of pretended philoſophy and religion; and by factitious intereſts and paſſions, from the concerns and practice of the world. A diſpoſition in men to do good to each other, is, in all conditions and modifications of moral life, the very principle which holds them together, and the origin of all their ſocial happineſs. But there are ſeveral cauſes which operate early on our minds; which are not friendly to this diſpoſition; and which counteract and deſtroy it. The moral principles which actuate the heart of man, are gradually compoſed of ſeveral little concurring circumſtances; which are hardly ever to be ſeen, but by thoſe who obſerve the treatment of children, and the gradual formation of the human character, in early life. This is the reaſon that philoſophers, who have been for the moſt

moſt part recluſe, have had no ſhare in the interior concerns of families, no acquaintance with the active buſineſs of human life; have been involved in various and inextricable difficulties, on the origin and formation of the ſeveral principles of morals. They ſaw only men in full maturity, and ſocieties when perfectly formed; where the effects of natural and unnatural principles, of good and bad habits, were ſo blended, that contradictory ſyſtems of morals were fabricated with equal plauſibility; and nothing but doubt and uncertainty could ariſe from the moſt induſtrious enquiries. They have generally been in the ſtate of thoſe Egyptian literati, who ſeem, by the accounts of travellers, to have ſpent much time, and to have taken infinite pains, in reaſoning from the appearance of the river Nile, to the nature of its ſources; their manner of riſing; the region they were in; and the various circumſtances which ſo peculiarly influenced that aſtoniſhing and beneficent ſtream. Much time was ſpent; great ingenuity was ſhewn; and great philoſophic reputation was probably acquired, by theſe hypothetical diſquiſitions: but no information was had; no truth obtained; and no valuable purpoſe anſwered. There was no remedy for this matter, but an actual journey into the region where the circumſtances took place, and a diligent and attentive obſervance of them. Infancy and youth are analogous to this region; and moral philoſophers are often in the ſtate of thoſe ſedentary and recluſe Egyptians, who multiplied ingenious and uſeleſs errors, on a ſubject, the very principles of which could be obtained only by an actual obſervance of facts.

This is the reaſon that beneficence has been ſo variouſly defined, and attributed to different and oppoſite cauſes. Men reaſoned from what they ſaw in characters and ſocieties fully formed; or, what is ſtill worſe, from informations and obſervations which they found in books. Hence the origin of philoſophical ſects, who have treated each other with as much contempt, though not with as much rancour and cruelty, as religious ones. Contentions and diſputes, which are carried on with any ſpecies of ill humour, have ſeldom, perhaps never, truth for their object. The philoſopher, or the Chriſtian, who ſtrives for his principles with angry and hateful paſſions, means not to do good: and it is generally a reaſon for our diſregarding a principle, that we find men uncharitably contending about it,

An enquiry into the nature of beneficence, conducted with the candour and judgment, which ought ever to direct us, would hardly fail of diſcovering the truth. Men are formed for mutual aſſiſtance; and, in every poſſible caſe where they can make the experiment, they find their happineſs in loving and ſerving each other. A ſolitary ſtate we can only imagine; no man having ever exiſted in ſuch a ſtate, who has had talents to deſcribe it. The fancies of poets on the ſubject, are all fabricated from the feelings of ſocial beings, and have not the leaſt degree of philoſophical truth; and they are like the apprehenſions of weak minds, in regard to the places of their burial, and their deſires and averſions for different graves. A ſtate perfectly ſolitary, is a ſtate in which a human being could not exiſt. He ſtands in abſolute need of care and aſſiſtance, to ſave him from pe-

riſhing in childhood; and that very care lays the firſt ſeeds of ſocial principles; and all imaginations of what is poetically called a ſolitary ſtate of nature, are falſe and deluſive.

It is in the manner of conferring the earlieſt aſſiſtances and benefits of life, that the firſt ſteps are taken towards forming the principle of beneficence. Every aſſiſtance which is given a child, even its raiment and food, may be given in ſuch a manner, as to form its diſpoſition right or wrong. As parents are for the moſt part injudicious or inattentive in this matter, which is among the many little things, the effects of which their underſtandings cannot diſcern; children, in very early infancy, become generally and evidently ſelfiſh; and never regard any perſon who approaches them, but as he may adminiſter to their wants or caprices. In general, the future character of the man depends on the degree of ſtrength, which, by injudicious management, is given to this diſpoſition; or to the care which is taken to counteract it, and to introduce a better principle, by accuſtoming them to little returns of duty, and little acts of friendſhip and generoſity. Moſt men being brought up at hazard; no attention paid to the manner of firſt forming their diſpoſitions; and the benefits they receive from the neceſſary care of their friends, when injudiciouſly adminiſtered, immediately creating ſelfiſhneſs; we are not to wonder that this appears in all the ſucceſſive ſtages of their lives; and is ſo conſpicuous in all their actions, as to give philoſophers ſome plauſible reaſons for adopting it, as the univerſal principle of morality. Very ingenious men have fallen into this error; and imagined intereſt,

which is the conſequence of doing good; and which, like all important moral conſequences, becomes a motive in its turn; is the firſt natural and univerſal reaſon for it. No man can deny that its influence is extenſive; and it may poſſibly be difficult for the moſt ingenious men, whoſe education has been equally faulty with thoſe of others, and who have been early taught the firſt leſſons of pretended goodneſs on mercenary motives, to conceive that there ſhould be a better, a more uſeful, and more univerſal principle in nature.

The aſſiſtances and benefits of parents have but a ſmall part of their effect, if they only ſupply the wants of animal life, and produce not that inexpreſſible attachment, or that reſpectful love, which is the firſt and original principle of a truly moral character. The earlier this is excited, the more ſure you will be of forming a good man. How rare, but how delightful, it is, to ſee a family actuated by this amiable ſpirit; where mutual love directs every action, and mutual aſſiſtance conſtitutes the general happineſs; where each is attentive, not to what he may receive, but to what he can render; and where hardly any one ever finds an advantage, but through the advantage of another!— This is the origin of the firſt ſocial principle which unites mankind, and which makes them advantageous, and happy in each other.

Thus far we find it often prevail, even againſt the groſſeſt errors of domeſtic management, and the ſtrongeſt effects of ſelfiſh appetites. The utmoſt ferocity, or profligacy of manners, is

hardly ever wholly unmingled with domeſtic love, or a ſincere deſire, in all the members of a family, to do good to each other. Unnatural and vicious principles muſt be removed a little from the firſt and ſtrongeſt influence of nature, in order to have any effect. All vices are puny and ineffectual, when they are immediately counteracted by natural and virtuous principles; and in the firſt ſimple aſſociations of men, they are ever checked and controuled by virtues. It is in complicated and artificial aſſociations, that they gradually prevail and multiply, until they become eſſential and actuating principles, and men are wholly governed by them. There is hardly any vice, but we may trace, in this manner, from a bare exiſtence in private life, and even that attended with ſhame and infamy, to the higheſt influence and power in artificial ſociety. Where this is the caſe; where the actions of individuals only are occaſionally virtuous; and where thoſe of the ſtate are directed by no principles of honour or honeſty, ſuch ſocieties are inſtituted on motives and views eſſentially vicious; and they cannot, under any poſſible circumſtances, long continue to give men even the appearance of proſperity or happineſs.

Vices, in this reſpect, are like thoſe venomous or ferocious animals, which are made their repreſentatives, or emblems. They are born innocent and helpleſs; but woe to thoſe who aſſiſt and foſter them!

In the firſt connections of ſociety, the principle of beneficence generally has conſiderable influence; and though its enemy, ſelfiſh-

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neſs, is cheriſhed and foſtered, it ſeldom ventures to ſhew itſelf openly. But in the actions of family to family, of city to city, &c. the principle of beneficence is gradually weakened, and that of ſelfiſhneſs gradually ſtrengthened, until, in the maxims and actions of great nations, vice becomes virtue, and virtue vice; all ideas of good-will are totally obliterated; and the principles of the baſeſt ſelfiſhneſs are the general laws. We ſee in this, as in many other caſes, the conſequences of errors in firſt principles. The numerous vices and miſchiefs ariſing from ſelfiſhneſs, may be palliated and alleviated by the influence of philoſophy and religion; but cannot poſſibly be removed, but by a proper attention to their origin. Young perſons, who are brought up without a judicious attention to their moral principles, may poſſibly be controuled in their firſt connections, and be tolerable members of families; but families, compoſed of ſuch tolerable members, are ſelfiſh, contentious, and vicious neighbours. Thus the miſchief acquires malignity, as theſe ſocieties are combined, until a modern empire, or a modern kingdom, is formed; the moſt unnatural, the moſt horrid, and the moſt vicious, monſter, that perhaps is poſſible to be exhibited in nature.

We might poſſibly talk as effectually of the joys of heaven, to ſuch ſpirits as are imagined to be the ſubjects of Satan, as talk to men in general, of the ſuperior advantages of every kind, ariſing from beneficence, compared with thoſe of ſelfiſhneſs. It would be delineating another Utopia, to deſcribe men as really and mutually loving each other; and this principle immediately bleſſing families, by giving them a common intereſt, and making them

them happy in the happineſs of the whole. The effects of this principle might be the ſame on larger ſocieties, in which families are as individuals. Every poſſible reaſon, which ſhould induce brothers and ſiſters to love and ſerve each other, ſhould induce families, which are the members of larger ſocieties, alſo to love and ſerve each other: for their real proſperity and happineſs muſt ariſe from the ſame cauſes. Thus, and thus only, virtuous and happy nations can be formed; and the various vices and evils that infeſt the world, can be leſſened and removed. We ſhould then no longer ſee thoſe ſtrange and unnatural appearances—contentions, wars, and cruelties, laying waſte the beſt intereſts and advantages of life. But we muſt not keep too near nature; or we ſhall be charged with improbability; and a plain detail of facts and deductions be affectedly ridiculed as ideal and viſionary deſcription. So much are men's imaginations perverted; and ſo far have they loſt ſight of truth!

LECTURE

LECTURE XXX.

BENEFICENCE. PART II.

Let us do good unto all men.

WE have already conſidered this duty, as it is founded on real benevolence; and have endeavoured to clear it from the imputation of that contracted and baſe ſelfiſhneſs, which modern philoſophy and religion have made the univerſal motive of human actions. This is not ſufficient to inſure the practice of beneficence. Every clog on the firſt principle may be removed; and yet ſuch difficulties ariſe, in the exerciſe of it, as deſerve our moſt ſerious attention. We may believe, as we ought to do, that the chief virtue of men is to love and ſerve one another; yet the manner of doing this may call for our utmoſt judgment.

The moſt prevailing miſtake, in regard to beneficence, is, an opinion, that, becauſe the duties of it cannot be ſpecified and enjoined, like thoſe of truth and juſtice, they are therefore not ſo obligatory; but are left to the inclination and choice of thoſe who are ſo favoured by fortune as to be enabled to perform them.

them. This is one reaſon why the rich, the great, and powerful, are ever the moſt uſeleſs members of a community; and that without ſhame or reproach: for the acts of their virtue are imagined to be of ſuch a nature, that they may perform them, or not perform them, at pleaſure. Theſe ſentiments of duty and obligation can prevail only when thoſe of nature are effaced. For though the ſecurity of property be neceſſary in ſociety, and every ſpecies of injuſtice ſhould be checked in the poorer and lower ſort of people: yet the ſecurity of property is not the end for which rational beings aſſociate; it is only one, among other means, conducive to that end; which is the greateſt poſſible happineſs. Now, if the man, who, in violation of the laws of juſtice, defrauds his neighbour, and injures ſociety, in one of the means of its happineſs, be deſerving of blame or puniſhment, how much more ſo muſt he be, who, in violation of the higher and more important laws of beneficence, ſhould neglect to contribute his ſhare to the general happineſs?—So that when we hear of great and rich men doing good, the ſentiments we may have may be thoſe of admiration at the extent of their beneficence; but we may probably regret their extreme deficiency in making uſe of the advantages they enjoy. Wiſdom or riches are allotted to us in large ſhares, not to enable us to pervert and injure the world; not to be uſed at random, or according to caprice; but to give us the conſtant and divine employment of relieving the miſeries, and heightening the joys of our fellow-creatures. The vice and wretchedneſs, which, for want of attending to this conſideration, ariſe in ſociety, are owing to the negligence of men in higher ſtations, and not, as it is weakly imagined, to the diſhoneſty and ill conduct of thoſe in lower.

Offences againſt the laws of beneficence are more numerous, and more injurious, than any which can poſſibly be committed againſt thoſe of mere juſtice. The higher orders of a community, not only get laws made to countenance their claims; but they form the opinions of the public in their own favour. We are actually ſo little advanced beyond that ſtate of barbariſm, in which all pre-eminence was the effect of brutal force, and every good action of a great man conſequently a condeſcenſion; that we hardly ever conſider benefience, but as a ſoft and virtuous kind of caprice; and never annex to dignity, power, and riches, the idea of neceſſary obligation. So much do we yet retain of the apprehenſions of brutes, that we eſtimate all the moral motives from their affording more or leſs bodily pain. If we, indeed, deſerved, as we pretend to deſerve, the character of men, what would all the terrors and puniſhments, which an executioner could ſet before us, be, when compared with what we ſhould feel, on conſidering the happineſs we might have occaſioned, by employing our talents with judgment; and the miſery which we have actually occaſioned, either by miſemploying or neglecting the uſe of them? The duties of beneficence will never be diſcharged; indeed, they never will be conſidered as duties, until this matter be clearly and univerſally underſtood; until the wiſe, the powerful, and the rich, are conſidered as under more ſacred and more important obligations, to do all they can to promote happineſs, than the poor are under to avoid fraud, and to be honeſt. We ſee, however, that this is very far from being the caſe. Acts of beneficence are now confined moſtly to a diſtribution of money; which, in its nature, is the loweſt

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ſpecies of beneficence; and which often has in it neither merit nor uſe. Money is the repreſentative of commodities; which are never to be obtained, but by labour and induſtry. To the rich it is procured by the induſtry of the poor; and the poor are ever miſerable, in proportion to the number of thoſe idle and vicious perſons, with which they are unhappily loaded. But as inequality of condition and property is the conſequence of a neceſſary law of nature, it cannot be prevented. Indeed, there is no reaſon for preventing it: for it might be productive of the beſt conſequences, which are loſt to us by civil inſtitutions, perhaps originally intended to reward virtue, but the real occaſions of numerous vices: I mean, the general laws concerning the inheritance of dignity, power and property. No man comes into the world entitled to more than the affectionate care of his parents, and a manly and virtuous education. But now, a man, deſtitute of underſtanding, is born to the reward of wiſdom in ſome of his anceſtors; and a villain to the reward of virtue: or, on the other hand, an honeſt man inherits large property, accumulated by fraud; and a man of a noble and excellent mind, finds himſelf in poſſeſſions which were obtained by the moſt ſhameful and deteſtable principles. This circumſtance, more than any thing we can well mention, helps to confound all diſtinction between vice and virtue; actions and diſpoſitions are ſeparated from their conſequences: and ſociety has no chance of bringing forward to its ſervices the wiſeſt and beſt of its members. I muſt here beg leave to guard againſt the influence of prepoſſeſſions, and the magic power of terms and phraſes. I am not aiming to give credit to what is now reproachful, under

the denomination of a levelling principle. The Spartan law, by which every man, of every capacity, was confined to a certain portion of ground, was ſuggeſted by a contracted, imperfect view of the intereſts of ſociety; and the various levelling ſchemes propoſed in the confuſion of the civil wars in England, and previous to the uſurpation of Cromwell, were the reveries of unexperienced enthuſiaſts. The proviſions of nature, and the intereſts of ſociety, in this, as in all other matters, are exactly the ſame: that all men ſhould ſet out in the world in ſituations becoming their talents; that thoſe perſons, who are unfortunate enough to have no capacity or diſpoſition to uſe power or property for the public benefit, ſhould not, on account of the merits of their parents, be entruſted with that power, or that property, to do miſchief; that talents and virtues ſhould be all employed for the public; create all its orders and dignities; receive all its rewards, and produce all its glory and happineſs. To ſay, that this cannot be done in any ſociety now exiſting; and that ſuch a ſociety is merely an ideal one—may be true; at the ſame time, it may be the ſevereſt ſatire which can be uttered againſt the preſent ſtate of things. To ſay, as it is actually ſaid, on many occaſions, that the principles, prejudices, habits, and vices of men, are ſuch, as to render all views for their benefit, which are founded on truly rational and virtuous maxims, abſurd, is the higheſt reproach on their civil and religious inſtitutions which can be imagined.

But though the rich diſcredit all ideas of natural juſtice and equity, and all arrangements and principles which ſpring from public

public virtue—though an equitable diſtribution of the bleſſings of life be ridiculed, like perfect honeſty and perfect virtue—yet moraliſts will ever keep the views of men on this diſtant, and, as ſome call it, viſionary, object; and will eſtimate their beneficence, not on a compariſon with others of their ſtation; but on a view of their power and obligations. If we look around us, and conſider acts of beneficence, with a due regard to the obligations of thoſe who perform them, we ſhall have no great reaſon to boaſt of the humanity even of our times. It is very poſſible that we may be improved, or rather grown leſs blameable, than we have been, in theſe reſpects. All the Gothic and feudal governments have been eſtabliſhed on brutal principles. The ſame conſiderations, which induce a ſavage brute to allow a region of depredation to another, leſs powerful than himſelf, actuated Gothic heads of banditti, or generals, or, as they have been ſince called, kings, to allow their aſſociates, or inſtruments in ravage and bloodſhed, ſome inferior powers of depredation. Commerce, arts, philoſophy, have meliorated theſe barbarous inſtitutions; but the general idea is not removed, that a man, on being born to power and riches is to be the terror and plague of mankind. If he ſhould diſappoint this common expectation in ſome degree, every act of reaſon and virtue is doubly praiſed; becauſe no obligations were ſuppoſed, and no expectations formed. We muſt ſay, to the encouragement and credit of the preſent times, that men's ideas on this ſubject are much improved; but yet at a great diſtance from truth and nature. Dignity, power, and wealth, are not univerſally licences to injury; and there are many well-meant, though ill-judged,

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eſſays made towards charity and beneficence. But we ſeem to have no idea of that certain principle of moral philoſophy; that principle, without which no ſociety can be long truly virtuous and happy—that every man's abſolute obligations and duties increaſe in proportion to his wiſdom, power, and wealth; and all omiſſions in expreſſions of benevolence are as criminal and injurious to the world, as fraud, theft, or any other villainy. The happineſs of ſociety is, like the effect of a machine, moſt complicated in its movements, but contrived on the trueſt and moſt admirable principles. The end to be anſwered by it, is the conſequence of order, not in ſome, or in many, but in all its parts. We ſhall never obtain the end of aſſociating together, by directing our attention wholly to a few claſſes of men, or to the means of keeping them in order, and to do their duty. All claſſes and all ſtations have their duties; and the conſequence is always injurious, when any of them are neglected. The language of our preſent morality and policy is not formed by theſe principles. The great and rich ſeem careful that the common people ſhould have what they may imagine to be principles, and be kept in order, either by laws or ſtratagems; while they leave themſelves as much as poſſible at liberty, both in principle and practice. To this, partly, it is owing, that, while the common people are obliged to do their duties by regulations and laws; while many of thoſe, who are juſt above them, do theirs from religious and moral inducements: the rich and great are almoſt univerſally deficient; and we ſhould find it extremely difficult to point out a man in an elevated ſtation, or a man of fortune, who does his duty decently; who does half the good it is evidently in his power to do. So that on a view

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of the conduct of ſuperior ranks, and eſtimating the deficiencies of all their moſt important and uſeful duties, the loſs and injury to the public are immenſe, and never to be remedied or eſtimated.

As the obligations of beneficence are principally confined to thoſe who are favoured by nature, education, and fortune, I ſhall offer ſome conſiderations, which ſhould induce them to do their duties in ſociety with the ſame punctuality and attention which are enjoined on the lower ranks of people, by law and authority.

The regularity and induſtry we find in common life are the effects of neceſſity; and that neceſſity is occaſioned by fear. Hence the diſſatisfaction and gloom which ever attend them. The motives which ſhould influence thoſe who are more at liberty, are more noble, more pleaſing, and, it is ſhameful that we cannot ſay, more effectual. Man is not made to be forced, even into happineſs; and that ſociety is ever ineffectual and miſerable, in proportion to the number and ſeverity of its legal reſtraints. The mechanic regularity and order, which are the conſequences of ſubmitting all actions to the direction of laws, and to the influence of penalties, never produce happineſs: they even deſtroy the firſt principle of it, which is the human intelligence. This, however, is the conſequence of public vices in communities which have been originally ill conſtituted; and which, from many cauſes, not immediately ariſing from their conſtitution, have had their exiſtence continued for many ages. This ſeems to be the caſe of China, where the government has ſurvived the uſual periods of proſperity,

rity, luxury, and vice; and has ſettled into an univerſal dominion of law, without moral virtue, and even at the expence of real wiſdom and happineſs. It would be difficult for a Chineſe to perform an action, which has not been referred to by ſome law, or ſome regulation. A wiſe and virtuous Chineſe muſt of conſequence be a phenomenon. While, therefore, in our communities, we may lament, that it ſhould be neceſſary to ſubmit any claſſes to the influence of fear, and the regulations of law; let thoſe of us, who are more at liberty, act from the motives and principles of men. The proper exerciſe of wiſdom, and the right uſe of riches, are not yet ſubject to legal regulations; and all the pleaſing duties of beneficence are in our own hands. We ſhall deſervedly forfeit this privilege, if we abuſe it; or if we make the diſtinction we are favoured with in ſociety the occaſion of miſchief and injury to it. If the labourer thinks himſelf obliged, by his wants, by his connexions with his wife and children, and by the fear of bodily puniſhment, not only to refrain from theft and injuſtice, but to work hard, and to exerciſe his prudence and underſtanding, to make his family happy—what muſt be our obligations, if we can, not only ſave our friends and connections from wants and diſtreſſes; but extend our hands to numbers around us, and aſſiſt thoſe who are not ſo happy? Is there any compariſon between the neceſſity and obligation of theſe duties?—Thoſe who would ſay, the former is a duty, becauſe the poor man cannot avoid it; and the latter is not a duty, becauſe the wiſe or rich may avoid it, do not underſtand the meaning of moral obligation. The wretch who can avoid it, be his talents and rank what they may, does not deſerve the name of man.

LECTURE XXXI.

BENEFICENCE. PART III.

Let us do good unto all men.

AFTER conſidering this duty, in the two laſt lectures, on general grounds of reaſonableneſs and obligation, it may not be improper to pay ſome regard to the particular views of the Apoſtle in enforcing it.

The Jews had oppoſed the doctrines of Chriſtianity, and put their author to death. After a ſeries of ſufferings in the firſt Apoſtles and preachers, ſome of the people believed in it, and adopted all the notions of privilege and advantage, which were to ariſe to thoſe who were admitted into the kingdom of God in this world, and in that which is to come. But the new converts conſidered the advantages held out by the Goſpel to be no bleſſings, unleſs they could be confined to themſelves; and they were ready to relinquiſh the hopes of heaven, if the gates of it were to be opened to their neighbours, and all mankind were to have a chance of ſharing with them in its happineſs.

This unnatural and unmanly ſelfiſhneſs, in nations as well as individuals, is owing to the want of true and genuine principles of morals; and it is as impoſſible for a nation truly to proſper, and to contribute its proper ſhare to the happineſs of the world, while the affections of the people never riſe higher than patriotiſm or nationality, as it is for an individual, who is ſelfiſh, to do any genuine act of goodneſs, or to perform any thing which may be juſtly denominated a moral virtue.

The prejudices created by an injudicious education; by civil and religious inſtitutions, which are not according to nature; form ſome things like magic circles around us, over which we hardly ever dare to ſtep, or we ſtep with apprehenſion and terror. This is in conſequence of a wiſe and excellent proviſion, made by Almighty God, to ſecure and render permanent thoſe principles and habits which are the eternal and invariable laws of the moral world, and which adminiſter to men all the happineſs they can enjoy. As the univerſe is governed by general laws, apparently ſubject to ſmall and inconſiderable deviations, for reaſons which we have not capacities to comprehend—the ſame general laws, which produce the happineſs of all moral beings throughout the univerſe, produce the misfortune, and perpetuate the miſery, of thoſe who have the unhappineſs to have their minds perverted by miſmanagement, bad religions, and bad governments. It was ordered by Almighty God, in great wiſdom and great goodneſs, that the principles of benevolence ſhould receive ſtrength from the habit of living together; from the ties of friendſhip; from the numerous and intereſting

tereſting attachments dependent on love; from that virtuous and generous regard which every man ſhould feel for thoſe who inhabit the ſame country, act under the ſame laws, and are made happy by the ſame principles of virtue and religion with himſelf. Theſe are like the knots of a large and beautiful tree, which, while they ſeem to limit and obſtruct its general nouriſhment, are the inſtruments of its various ſecretion, purity, and refinement; which circulates that nouriſhment through the whole, while they adapt its ſtrength, or power, or delicacy, to the reſpective natures of particular parts. In the moral world, the various modifications of virtue may be conſidered as modifications of benevolence; having one degree of ſtrength, when ſhewn to men merely as ſuch; having another united to good-opinion, friendſhip, and all the intereſting affections of family-union and kindred; and having another when united to real patriotiſm, a juſt and virtuous love of one's country, a regard to that univerſal virtue, which ought to actuate nations to each other, and a general love of all mankind. The original principle is the ſame, though very differently modified, by being blended with others in various circumſtances. Good things, when miſapplied, become evil in proportion to their goodneſs; and we ſhall ſee that beneficence finds its greateſt difficulties from thoſe very appointments which are wiſe and good in nature, and which exceedingly diverſify, heighten, and improve the happineſs of thoſe who obſerve them.

You may poſſibly remember, that, in pointing out the origin of the human paſſions, we took notice of the early pro-

duce of the two great principles which rule the moral world, ſelfiſhneſs and benevolence; we pointed out the meaſures by which they were formed, and the reaſons and effects of their oppoſition and conteſt. Here we have another occaſion of exemplifying the principles we then laid down. The proviſions of a good Being, for the diffuſion of benevolence, which always includes the higheſt and pureſt ſelf-love—the ties, attachments, and connections, which were to give variety to our happineſs, were all ſuited to a truly ſocial being, who was never to find his happineſs but through the happineſs of his fellow-creatures. Where the principle of benevolence prevails, which God appointed as the baſis of all the various affections of the human heart—men, in all ſituations and connections are virtuous and happy. They are kind to their neighbours; love their friends; cheriſh the affections of kindred and relations, fellow-ſubjects and citizens, as principles which have the ſtrongeſt affinities to each other, which occaſionally blend and occaſionally ſeparate, as the ſituation and happineſs of mankind require.

Change the general principle into ſelfiſhneſs, and you wholly change the ſcene. The commerce of a ſelfiſh man with his neighbour is ever ſtrongly marked with an undue and unpleaſing regard to his own intereſt. His affection for his friend, if he may be ſaid to have one, is a regard for an inſtrument of convenience, a ſycophant, a flatterer, or a dependant: theſe various charities, paſſions, and affections, which make domeſtic life a ſtate of ſweet enchantment; which ſanctify, meliorate, and turn into ſoft and melancholy pleaſures, the oppreſſions of power, the

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rapacity and cruelty of the rich, the viſitations of poverty, ſickneſs, age, and death—theſe, by ſelfiſhneſs, loſe their charm; they are turned into ſpurious and harſh paſſions, which juſt ſerve to keep mankind together to torment and injure each other.

In large communities the evil is more obvious, as it is grown to a ſize and ſtrength not to be aſhamed of itſelf. Reproach is loſt in the numbers who are to ſhare it; while communities, made up of individuals and families where an immoral ſelfiſhneſs prevails, exhibit the features of thoſe who compoſe it, drawn on a ſcale which may be ſeen by the whole world. In the progreſs of corruption by means of ſelfiſhneſs, from its effect on the mind of an individual, to that which it has on the whole community, we ſee it gradually deſtroys every moral virtue; and a nation, the individuals of which may think it neceſſary to ſave appearances, and to talk of honeſty, and even benevolence, will act without ſhame on principles that would diſgrace a robber; will undermine the rights, ſeize the property, ſacrifice the happineſs and lives of whole ſocieties, in a manner which will ſhew it to be deſtitute of all ideas, not only of benevolence, but of truth, honeſty, and juſtice. If ſuch people pretend to be religious, the evil muſt be infinitely multiplied, as we ſee poiſon producing its effects according to the nature of the vehicle by which it is conveyed. Religion, as the cauſe or the effect of benevolence; as uniting men into one univerſal family, of which God is the father, is the ſublimeſt and greateſt bleſſing under heaven. Religion, poiſoned by ſelfiſhneſs, dividing men into parties, generates paſſions of uncommon rancour and

miſchief, and is the greateſt curſe which has ever befallen the world.

Thus we ſee our various obſtructions to the practice of genuine beneficence. When our minds have not been formed on the principles of nature, we get into the power of ſelfiſhneſs and vice in ſome ſhape or other. We cannot love our neighbours, and we are not at liberty to do them good; becauſe we have not a common intereſt, and we claſh with each other. Our ſocial principles cannot extend themſelves even to our families and friends; ſelfiſhneſs makes us ſtand aloof from our neareſt connections, and either thwart their innocent inclinations, or tyrannize over them. In the general conduct and morality of life, Faſhion draws her circle around us, and we ever walk within it. She taxes our talents, time, and fortune, at an exorbitant rate; and hardly leaves us any thing to aſſiſt the diſtreſſed, or to promote the happineſs of the world. To avoid the reproach of ſingularity, from ignorance and folly, we waſte the means of making thouſands of our fellow-creatures happy. Here men are uſually reproached for ſacrificing their own gratification: but it is a miſtake.—It is the property of error and vice, and particularly of ſelfiſhneſs, ſo to pervert the underſtanding, and corrupt the heart, that men no longer look to moral pleaſures as their principal gratifications. That falſe philanthropy, that fickly, weak, ſpurious love of mankind, which induces men to appear as others do, be that right or wrong, decent or ridiculous, drains ſociety of all its beſt ingredients. The greateſt part of a man's time, talents, and fortune, are expended to keep him

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on a footing of abſurdity with thoſe of his rank. Charity, humanity, mercy, call on him in vain; for he has nothing to beſtow. The ſelfiſh, vain regard, which he thinks it abſolutely neceſſary to pay to his ſtation, is an excuſe to the world, and to himſelf, that he neglects all the firſt duties of a ſocial being. The common apology for the want of pecuniary beneficence is, that the neceſſary, or the faſhionable, expences of living are ſo encreaſed, that men have nothing left for the occaſional and inferior purpoſes of aſſiſting their fellow-creatures. Faſhion waves her wand over a region of extravagance without taſte; of folly without paſſion; of hurry and occupation without object or employment; and leaves the reſt of the world to ignorance, wretchedneſs, and miſery.—The other extreme of ſingularity and oddity is an obſtruction to beneficence. To do one's duty in its utmoſt extent, it is not neceſſary to be always ſingular. The mild and genuine principle of benevolence will lead a man to prefer his duties to the obſervances and cuſtoms of the world; but without affectation, without ſeverity, and without rancour. Singularity, even in virtue, is a ſpecies of ſelfiſhneſs, and ſeeks its own gratification at the expence, and even to the torment, of others.

Love of one's country, when only a prepoſſeſſion, or a blind, enthuſiaſtic paſſion, is a modification of the ſame narrow principle of ſelfiſhneſs; and the effect of an education on ſelfiſh motives. Hence that total want of moral character among nations, and the difficulty of extending good-will and beneficence beyond the limits of our country. The patriotiſm which ſprings from

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virtue, is only a ſpecies of benevolence; and though its object be the intereſt and happineſs of a particular ſtate, it ſprings immediately from that affection which is directed to all mankind. A good man loves his country, not becauſe it is his country; but becauſe its public objects, views, and actions are honourable, and beneficial to the world. And as there may be melancholy caſes, wherein a virtuous child may be induced, by the vices of his parent, to hate him; ſo there may be, in which a good man may deteſt his country. In all caſes, where this public affection is not founded on virtue, it is a ſpurious one; it obſtructs, inſtead of promoting, the general effects of our benevolence; and it is of detriment, inſtead of being ſerviceable, to the world. It is not uncommon, therefore, to ſee the virtues of a nation totally confined within its boundaries, in the ſame manner as the inclinations and views of ſome perſons are to themſelves; and men of different countries think themſelves juſtified in hating, deſpoiling, and injuring each other.

It is with regret that we muſt conſider religion as furniſhing the moſt formidable hindrances to the practice of beneficence. The proofs of wiſdom and goodneſs in the works of God, are not only ſubjects of contemplation and wonder; but they furniſh us with the beſt principles of wiſdom and virtue. Their firſt effect is to give a view of all mankind as one family; having a common intereſt; and made happy by mutual affection and mutual aſſiſtance. Pure and genuine religion, founded on this broad baſis of piety and benevolence, is not only friendly to every virtue, but the immediate cauſe of it. In this ſenſe, there

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is no good quality and no good action in the world, which is not owing to religion. But if we conſider another matter, which is called by this ſacred name, and which is nothing more than a ſelfiſh traffick of opinions, doctrines, and maxims, it has produced more vice and miſery than moſt cauſes we can poſſibly name. The hatred of one ſect and party to another; the calumny, miſchief, and cruelty, which have been exerciſed under its banners; will diſhonour the annals of the world for ſome centuries: they have ſo diſgraced the very word religion, and rendered all pretenſions to it ſo ſuſpicious and equivocal, that it may require ſome centuries to recover any conſiderable degree of credit and influence in the world. We may, even now, as well talk of the duties of beneficence to the votaries of religious ſects, as of forbearance and forgiveneſs to the ſavages of America. It is not, therefore, ſufficient to ſay, that the commerce of opinions, and the trade of doctrines, which give riſe to religious ſects, are obſtructions to our beneficence—they totally deſtroy all diſpoſitions to it.

Thus we ſee that the ſtudy and practice of our moral duties are attended with difficulty, and require our utmoſt wiſdom and care. I cannot help reminding you of what I have often obſerved, that moral philoſophy is the higheſt object of human enquiry. We ſee one error in its principles running through and corrupting all the aſſociations and inſtitutions, which the ſecondary wiſdom of politicians and prieſts contrive for the proſperity of the world. We may form empires; make laws;

invent arts, commerce, ſciences, and ſyſtems of religion—and be worthleſs and wretched. It is the accurate, the inceſſant, ſtudy and practice of morality will furniſh us with that true wiſdom, which, like elementary fire, will pervade and animate our other principles; and, by making us truly benevolent, will make us truly happy.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXII.

BENEFICENCE. PART IV.

Let us do good unto all men.

BENEFICENCE is ſo important and ſo eſſential a branch of moral virtue, that on many occaſions it has been given as the beſt general definition of it. Wiſdom, power, and riches, are defined, by the beſt minds, only as the means of doing good. The intentions and views of a beneficent heart adminiſter to us the greateſt ſhare of the happineſs we enjoy. It is of importance, therefore, that we ſhould dwell on this ſubject; not perhaps with the hope of obtaining information, or ſuggeſting new principles and new thoughts; but with the view of recollecting and holding before our minds thoſe conſiderations, which may animate us to our duties, and enable us to overcome the difficulties in the practice of them. As all vice is owing to ignorance and inattention of ſome kind or other—ſo, in the particular caſe before us, ſtrong and genuine principles of benevolence have been wearied, as it were, out of the human heart, by being led at random againſt difficulties, which ſeemed, like the heads of the hydra, to multiply by being ſevered and re-

moved. In all undertakings of difficulty and importance, it is prudent to arrange the buſineſs, to look to the end, and to number the obſtructions we are to remove—we then proportion our ſtrength to the occaſion; and our reſolution never fails, becauſe we underſtand and know our duty. When this is not the caſe; when we have not arranged our duties and their difficulties, we move like ſuperſtition in a dark night; a ſhort journey ſeems endleſs; our fears multiply dangers; and we fall into ſome misfortune through ignorance and deſpair.

We have already made beneficence the ſubject of three lectures; and have conſidered, as diſtinctly and as uſefully as we could, the ſeveral great cauſes, in education, in ſyſtems of policy, and in forms of religion, which prevent the formation of this principle in the human mind.

Though theſe cauſes have a general, they have not an univerſal, effect. The mere extenſion of commerce, in the preſent ſtate of the world, has obviated greatly the inconveniences which uſed to ariſe from prepoſſeſſions in favour of a province, a kingdom, or even of a religious ſyſtem. The convenience ariſing from a general communication has opened the minds of men to more enlarged views of their duties; and philoſophy, morality, and religion, have not only been aſſiſted in diffuſing themſelves, but they have received one of their beſt and moſt important leſſons from trade.

Be it acknowledged, then, that the differences of climate, country, and religion, are gradually loſing their effect; and that the

minds and hearts of all men are gradually aſſimilating; ſoften-ing, from ſelfiſh, political, or ſuperſtitious ferocity, into a human form: that mankind are diſpoſed to conſider themſelves as conſtituting one common family; bearing the relation of brethren; and to find their higheſt intereſt and happineſs in the happineſs of one another. This would form and ſecure the principle of benevolence. We ſee, accordingly, that thoſe who now poſſeſs it are in general diſpoſed to do good unto all men. Allowing this to be the caſe, that we have removed the difficulties already mentioned, there are others remaining, which may diſcourage and wear out even our good diſpoſitions, if we ſhould not be aware of, and determined to riſe ſuperior to them.

A diſpoſition to do good, whether it be in the uſe of wiſdom, of power, or of riches, cannot be long concealed from thoſe whoſe neceſſities and miſeries oblige them to look out for it. The applications of diſtreſs, like many other applications, ſoon become an art; and it requires great judgment in the benefactor to avoid impoſition. The difficulty in this matter is ſo great, that men very commonly loſe their beneficence; totally loſe the very diſpoſition to do good, in repeated diſappointments, occaſioned by artifice and impoſture. They have tried, feebly, injudiciouſly, and at random, but perhaps ſincerely and often, to diſtinguiſh the worthy from the unworthy, and the good from the bad; but they have tried in vain—they have therefore concluded the diſtinction was not to be made; that all men were impoſtors; that they ſhould ſeek the gratification of their benevolence to no purpoſe; and that the principle itſelf muſt be un-

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natural, romantic, and uſeleſs. Greater wiſdom, greater experience, and a greater knowledge of the world, would inſtruct them in a general truth, which is ſufficient to obviate all theſe difficulties—that art and impoſture are attended with aſſurance, indolence, and profligacy; and that merit is modeſt, diffident, and induſtrious; that the wicked offer themſelves, and form the foremoſt phalanx, through which you muſt penetrate, and behind which you muſt ſeek and ſolicit the truly deſerving. However, we are by no means to adhere even to this general rule. Diſtreſs, brought on by vice, is often artful and impoſing. When we are even aſſured of this, it is not always a reaſon for withholding our beneficence. A human creature in miſery is an object of beneficence, whatever may have been the cauſe of that miſery. It is the part of wiſdom to judge what relief we can afford them, conſiſtent with the obligations we are under to ourſelves, and to more deſerving objects in real diſtreſs.

The quantity of happineſs, to be enjoyed by any ſociety, is in proportion to all the talents and faculties which may be employed by that ſociety, in the beſt and moſt rational manner. No poſſible obligation can be conceived more ſacred than this—the obligation of every member of a community to employ his talents, his influence, or his fortune, ſo as to produce that utmoſt ſum and quantity of ſocial happineſs, from which alone he can obtain his ſhare. All expedients to make men virtuous, who cannot raiſe their minds to this object; who have not that true, well-formed ſenſibility, which will be ſteadily actuated by it—all ſuch expedients are ineffectual. You may invent temptations,

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of ineſtimable value, to a mind ill-formed and perverted, and you will excite temporary, unnatural, and ineffectual wiſhes—you may hold up the doctrine of eternal damnation; you may diſturb an imagination already too irregular; you may change one ſpecies of fear and uneaſineſs for another; you may terrify a man into a mechanical and ſuperſtitious obedience; make him go through obſervances with the timidity and apprehenſion of a ſlave: but you will not furniſh him with a natural, uniform, generous principle of moral conduct. It is not poſſible to hold up, to the view of mankind, an object ſo truly ſacred as the happineſs of ſociety; which can be produced only by the reaſonable and moral conduct of all the members of that ſociety. Nothing, therefore, can well be imagined more deſirable, than that men ſhould conceive themſelves as contributing, by the improvement or neglect of their minds; by moral or immoral actions, to a general ſum of ſocial happineſs and miſery, out of which they muſt take their portion. This is the real fact; and nothing in heaven or earth can ever invalidate it. It is ſelfiſh; it is mean; it is unmanly and immoral, to confine our views to perſonal gratifications and perſonal ſufferings, which may be continued even to eternity; when thoſe great purpoſes are neglected, for which we were created, endued with rational and moral principles, and made capable of moral happineſs. I repeat it, therefore, that it is not poſſible to hold up before the mind an object equally important with that general ſum of happineſs or miſery, which is produced in every ſociety by the wiſdom and virtue of its members; which is afterwards ſhared among them in juſt and proper proportions; and by laws as invariable

as thoſe by which the ſun moves, though not yet ſo well underſtoood, or ſo much attended to. Whatever we think, whatever we deviſe, whatever we do—come under the controul and direction of theſe laws. But I cannot hope to raiſe your minds to them. They are the higheſt poſſible objects of human contemplation. The laws of matter and motion, which ſo intenſely employed the divine faculties of a Newton, are puerile and unimportant, when compared with thoſe laws which rule the moral world with equal certainty; under the controul of which, not only elements and maſſes of matter are made to form beautiful worlds and regular ſyſtems; but minds and thoughts and ſentiments, in all poſſible combinations, are made to produce all the good and all the evil in the univerſe. I inſiſt the more emphatically on this truth, becauſe men are defective in goodneſs for want of proper motives to it. Every thing which I am to enjoy or to ſuffer, in any poſſible future ſtate, will be in conſequence of the character I have ſuſtained here. My buſiis therefore here; and the firſt motives which ſhould affect my mind are preſent ones. If I have not wiſdom and goodneſs enough to make myſelf and others happy in this world, it is impoſſible I ſhould be ſo, or make others ſo, hereafter. And to oblige a wretch whom education, ignorance, and misfortune have made miſerable here, to contemplate eternal torments as his portion hereafter, is a refinement on eccleſiaſtical cruelty, which is excuſed neither by reaſon nor utility.

Our buſineſs, therefore, is to hold ſteadily before our minds thoſe great objects which were deſigned by Almighty God immediately

mediately to affect and govern us. The happineſs reſulting from doing good is the higheſt object at which a man can aim.—Every poſſible thought, and every poſſible action, comes immediately under the influence of thoſe laws, by which the general ſum of happineſs or miſery is produced, and the various portions of men allotted. But perhaps I may not be underſtood; and I ſhould content myſelf with ſaying, that every man will be happy in proportion to what he contributes, by his wiſdom and his virtues, to the general happineſs; that this law conſtitutes a moſt ſacred obligation; and that it is not poſſible to tranſgreſs it with impunity. Let us keep this conſideration in mind, and ſee whether we have not a motive, not only to do good, but to be extremely attentive that we do all the good it is poſſible for us to do. It is of importance, therefore, in a moral view, we ſhould take the utmoſt care, that our acts of goodneſs be not beſtown on the unworthy: for we thereby commit an act of real injuſtice to thoſe who are the proper objects of them; and we ultimately puniſh ourſelves, by not contributing to that univerſal happineſs from which we are to derive our own.

To this general motive there are other ſecondary ones, in the ſtricteſt alliance. Beſides the conſciouſneſs of beneficent intentions, which is in itſelf a noble ſentiment; beſides the inexpreſſible pleaſure of a wiſe and good mind ſharing in the pleaſure of his friends, his dependants, his neighbours, his country, to which he largely contributes—there are immediate ſatisfactions, produced on a private and ſmaller ſcale. Every benefit, wiſely

conferred, produces an attachment and gratitude in the perſon obliged, than which nothing under heaven is a higher gratification. As a proof of this, we need only obſerve how eaſily artful men find means to counterfeit it; and how long wiſe and excellent minds ſubmit to the impoſition. The enthuſiaſm of benevolence, like the enthuſiaſm of a tenderer paſſion, makes perſons of the fineſt ſenſibility, and the beſt diſpoſitions, moſt liable to deceit and diſappointment. The attachment and gratitude occaſioned by benefits are the produce only of the very beſt ſoil. It is folly, therefore, to expect them in vicious, or even in indifferent, characters. Theſe are to be treated like barren and indifferent ground, and to be benefitted without the hope of a reward. Every man judges of another by what he feels in himſelf. No bad man ever could believe that another did him a benefit by a moral, a beneficent, or a generous action. His returns, therefore, are affected, flattering, and ſelfiſh—And it is an effect extremely common, to produce the moſt inveterate hatred in bad minds, merely by means of benefits. An ill-diſpoſed man always poſſeſſes a kind of pride, which is offended at the thought of an obligation. As there is hardly any thing eaſier than to impoſe upon and miſlead the paſſions, when once they are fixed on their objects, he finds it not difficult to impoſe on his benefactor, till it ſuits his convenience to pull off the maſk. And we muſt have obſerved, that the rancour, hatred, and malice of ſuch a man, have been beyond thoſe of common enemies; and ever in proportion to the number and greatneſs of the benefits which were beſtown upon him. He conceived himſelf injured by the ſuperiority of his benefactor; he knew

knew that he injured him by his falſe returns of gratitude and obligation; which are both moſt forcible reaſons with ſuch a man for hatred. This is increaſed by every repeated obligation; and it is extremely common to ſee a good man injured with the moſt inveterate malice, and ſuffering under the worſt uſage, becauſe he had been guilty of cheriſhing a viper in his boſom.

It would be impoſſible to ſpecify all the cautions which are neceſſary to be obſerved in the practice of beneficence. In general, we ſhould conſider our good affections and good actions as the moſt valuable things we have to beſtow; and take the utmoſt care that we beſtow them not unworthily. The farmer regards the ſoil into which he commits his wheat; the gardener carefully diſtinguiſhes the ſeveral beds, from which he expects either beauty or profit. In morality, it is of more importance, that we ſhould ſuit our affections and actions to their proper objects; and that while we do good, as we have opportunity, unto all men, we ſhould attach ourſelves to, and expect our happineſs only from, virtuous and excellent minds.

I have dwelt ſo long on this ſubject, that I cannot think of treſpaſſing further on your patience. I ſhould otherwiſe enlarge on the manner of conferring benefits, when we have diſtinguiſhed the proper objects; on the great attention due to modeſty; and the care of not hurting the delicacy of noble minds. But as theſe things, however deſirable, are only the circumſtances and embelliſhments of a virtue, which, if genuine, will atone for the want of them, I thought they might be omitted with leſs conſequence than

any of thoſe conſiderations we have had before us. It is your buſineſs, and it is your intereſt, to recollect what has been offered on this moſt important of all ſubjects; not as matters of curioſity, or temporary entertainment: for, you may be aſſured, I think it not worth my while to come before you for any ſuch purpoſes:—but as things which may lead you to, what I ſuſpect you greatly want, a reviſal of thoſe principles on which your diſpoſitions are formed; and on which you may endeavour, as you have opportunity, to "do good unto all men."

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXIII.

MODESTY. PART I.

Let no man think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think.

IN the proſecution of our deſign, to give a connected ſeries of lectures on the principles and duties of morality, we come to the virtue of modeſty; the next in order to that which we have been lately conſidering.

We have viewed the wonderful arrangements and proceſſes of nature, in forming the powers and principles of the human mind. We have ſeen the great and eſſential foundations of a moral and manly character, in knowledge, truth, honeſty, and beneficence. We are now come to a period, or to a ſtage of an edifice, where circumſtances are to be added, in the manner of ſuperſtructures; which will be firm, beautiful, and uſeful, according to the nature of the foundation we have laid. Let it be remembered, then, that I am not addreſſing myſelf to thoſe who are deſtitute of that kind of knowledge, and thoſe diſpoſitions and principles, which we have already ſeen to be eſſential

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to a moral character. Without theſe, it would be as abſurd to adviſe a man to aim at becoming modeſt, as to adviſe him to raiſe a ſuperſtructure without having laid a foundation. This is the reaſon that we ſee ſo many perſons, of good intentions, who have been awakened to a ſenſe of their defects by ſome accidental circumſtances in their lives, mortified by ſhame; which is a principle very different from modeſty in its nature, though ſimilar in its effects. The reproach and uneaſineſs, which are the ingredients of ſhame; and which ariſe from criminal defects, or the unexpected diſcovery of immoral intentions—do not at all enter into the nature of modeſty; which, though it be converſant with defects, is not owing to them; and always accompanies the higheſt excellencies, and the greateſt degrees of moral perfection.

We are to dwell on theſe definitions and diſtinctions; becauſe it is abſolutely neceſſary, to our moral improvement, that we ſhould underſtand them. I might eaſily tell you of dire conſequences of your miſconduct; and frighten or flatter you with ſcenes of miſery or happineſs which you would enter upon.—So might a watch or a clock be told, that confuſion and deſtruction would be the conſequence of its not keeping time; and the effects would be nearly the ſame, becauſe the cauſes were. The inſtrument, in both caſes, was either originally ill-formed, or it was capriciouſly and irregularly managed; the principles or wheels, which gave it its firſt eſſential motions, were clogged with obſtructions, which knowledge and judgment only could remove. It may be neceſſary that I ſhould explain myſelf.

ſelf. I do not mean that hopes and fears are not, in ſome caſes, uſeful motives of a moral conduct; but they are only inferior ones; and they never produce a truly moral action, while they are the ſole and ruling principles. The actions of a man, who is entirely under their influence, are like the actions of a modern ſchool-boy, exactly and diligently performed; but without that voluntary and affectionate diſpoſition which is neceſſary to a virtuous character. Many of the diſpoſitions, therefore, which are eſſential to a good mind; which make it happy in itſelf, and pleaſing to the world, are left out of thoſe religious ſyſtems which govern men only by their hopes and fears. It would be abſurd to expect the virtue of modeſty from merely ſaying to a man—If you be modeſt, you may enjoy certain advantages and rewards; and if you be proud and vain, you may be conſigned to future torments. And yet truth, juſtice, beneficence, are not more eſſential to a moral character, and the real happineſs of a man, than modeſty.

To form, to cultivate, or to recover this principle, it is neceſſary we ſhould underſtand its nature, and diſtinguiſh it from diſpoſitions which are ſimilar to it. As it would have ſerious conſequences to the farmer, if, by ignorance, he ſhould ſow his ground with tares inſtead of corn: ſo it muſt be in the management and cultivation of the human mind. The moſt extenſive and the moſt accurate knowledge are neceſſary, to prevent miſtakes, as to the nature and uſe of thoſe diſpoſitions which are formed in it. For it will be juſt as reaſonable to expect an advantageous harveſt where no proper ſeed has been

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ſown, as to expect virtue and happineſs, without attention to the principles and habits which produce them.

It is not ſufficient that we ſhould have knowledge; or even practiſe virtue—unleſs they be accompanied with modeſty. Indeed, it has been very plauſibly queſtioned, whether that knowledge or that virtue be real, which is vain and oſtentatious? The full and natural exertion of any real power is ever eaſy and pleaſing; and why the poſſeſſion of any quality ſhould occaſion immodeſty, appears at firſt unaccountable. But it often does; and the ridicule excited by it is ſo great; nay, the real inconvenience ariſing from it is ſometimes ſo conſiderable, that we lament a man's misfortune in having great or good qualities, which are, on the whole, an injury to him and to the world. There is no doubt, therefore, but vanity and impudence may be the characteriſtic failings or vices of a man, who has qualities in his mind which are really great and good. But thoſe qualities are like diſtant and ſeparate lights, ſhining in a dark place, and ſerving only to ſhew its horror and deformity.

That elevation of character; that inſtantaneous contempt of mean and unworthy actions, and even of mean and unworthy perſons, which is called pride, is a noble and uniform principle; and is as different from vanity, as the equal and manly exertions of muſcular ſtrength, are from the extravagant diſtortions and unpleaſing efforts of convulſive force. This is the ſublime in virtue—Modeſty is the beautiful and pleaſing. Pride is called out but ſeldom, on prompt and great occaſions—modeſty always,

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and on every occaſion. It is the attendant grace of all the virtues; it ſmoothes their aſperities, curbs their impetuoſity, and gives them a ſoft kind of finiſhing, and charm, to which they owe their higheſt power of pleaſing.

Of ſo much conſequence is this diſpoſition, that we often ſee a profuſion of great and good qualities loſt to the world, becauſe they are unattended with it. In women, whoſe peculiar province it is to pleaſe, the moſt important, the very characteriſtic, virtue, is modeſty. The moſt exquiſite beauty, and the moſt brilliant wit, are objects only of a moment's admiration, unleſs ſoftened and rendered intereſting by that amiable reſerve, that half-concealment, which are the effects of modeſty. All the attempts of women to give up this peculiar charm of their ſex, and to exchange it for more manly qualities, have ever been at the expence of their power and influence in ſociety; of their real intereſt and real happineſs. If they tread the paths of licentious pleaſure, impudence is their bane. If, in domeſtic life, where their province is, as the ſofteſt ſtops of a muſical inſtrument, to reſtore that ſweet equilibrium, which is ſo often diſturbed by the neceſſary perturbations and buſineſs of ſociety—if they enter into that buſineſs, and increaſe thoſe perturbations; however we may allow them to have courage and ſenſe, and to act our parts well; we diſlike them, as we do all kinds of monſters; they have loſt the characteriſtics of their ſex, and imperfectly and diſagreeably aſſumed ours. The lines and boundaries of nature are never to be paſſed over with impunity; and it is a falſe and unnatural ambition, which makes

a woman wiſh to appear as a man, either in perſon, wit, or underſtanding; as that would be, which would induce a man to appear as a bear. All the late alterations in the education and purſuits of women; which, inſtead of teaching them to ſubdue by yielding, and to govern by obedience; has furniſhed them with weapons of offence; given them point and brilliancy of wit; a talent of diſputing, carping and criticiſing; and kept them in the maſculine regions of learning, diſquiſition, and enquiry—theſe alterations, by deſtroying their modeſty, has been fatal to their influence; and if ſome caprice does not lead them back to their ſtation, they will ſoon be objects only of the groſſeſt and meaneſt appetites, of perfect indifference, of diſlike, and even of deteſtation. Of ſo much importance is modeſty in one branch of ſociety. Wit, knowledge, learning, and even virtue in women, are uſeleſs, nay, perhaps injurious, without it.

Theſe perhaps are uncommon objects of your attention at church. You may poſſibly have been accuſtomed to doſe at the dull recognition of diſtant objects, while your hearts have ached every moment of your lives; while your families have been deranged, and your happineſs ſacrificed, by a want of attention to thoſe which immediately affected you. We may be rich and proſperous; we may be learned and wiſe; underſtand all myſteries, and all languages; and be aſſured that our religion is leading us to heaven—and all this will ſignify nothing, if the diſtinctions and laws of nature are deſtroyed; if the characteriſtic virtues of the ſexes are exchanged; and women affect to be like men, or men affect to be like women.

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In like manner, we may conſider many other caſes, which are attended to with more gravity; though it be not poſſible they ſhould be of more importance.

It is almoſt impoſſible to poſſeſs a quality or talent without a conſciouſneſs of it. This becomes immodeſt only in weak minds; in minds which are poſſeſſed of one, or a few good qualities; but deſtitute of many others, which are eſſential to a manly character. When all the faculties of the mind, and all the diſpoſitions of the heart, are cultivated as they ought to be; from the general effect of action and counter-action, every exertion is natural and eaſy, and conſequently modeſt and pleaſing. But when a few qualities only are poſſeſſed, the natural balance of the mind cannot be preſerved; all its powers fly to cultivate and to exhibit thoſe few qualities, and a character of vanity and impudence is formed. Beauty, accompanied with underſtanding and goodneſs, is always modeſt and pleaſing; becauſe it is not, and cannot be, in the perſon who poſſeſſes it, the ſole object of attention. Beauty, unaccompanied and uninformed by a good mind, is ever vain, impudent, and diſguſting; becauſe it is, and muſt be, the ſole object of attention.

Even in men, whoſe peculiar character is not modeſty, this virtue muſt accompany moſt of thoſe qualities and virtues which make them uſeful and happy in ſociety.

Wiſdom, which is the firſt object of a manly mind, gives a ſuperiority which it is dangerous to poſſeſs, unleſs it be ſoftened

by modeſty. This virtue is neceſſary, to render wiſdom uſeful, by making it ſink to a level where it has a ſuperiority; and unaffectedly condeſcend to all the offices by which it can inform, improve, and benefit mankind.

In the exerciſe of all the moral virtues, and particularly in acts of beneficence, this virtue is indiſpenſable. It is modeſty only which can make the power of doing good a bleſſing to the world. It is this alone which will make us appear to the unfortunate as brothers and ſiſters coming to their relief; and not, as maſters, to inſult, while we deign to lift them up. It is this alone which poſſeſſes the invaluable ſecret, which may enable a man to have wiſdom and power and riches; and to diffuſe the effects of them through the world, without ſubjecting the poſſeſſor to the common lot of benefactors, that of having the envy, hatred, and curſes of mankind.

In religion, this virtue is truly becoming. The truths relating to the Deity are derived from the principles and laws of nature; of which we underſtand but little, and on which we ſhould be cautious to pronounce. Modeſty will teach us to avoid forming haſty and peremptory opinions; and when we have obtained any, to offer them to the notice of others with diffidence. This would prevent all pretence to authority in matters of ſpeculation and faith; leave men, as God has left them, mutually to aſſiſt each other in their enquiries after truth; but not to convert their accidental diſcoveries into principles, which they may force others to take in exchange for their liberty or their money.

money. The characteriſtics of a falſe religion are vanity, inſolence, and bigotry; which lead to uncharitableneſs, oppreſſion, cruelty, and all the vices which can be named. The characteriſtics of true religion are modeſty, candour, univerſal toleration, and univerſal benevolence:—it is pure, peaceable, gentle; eaſy to be entreated; full of mercy and of good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocriſy.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXIV.

MODESTY. PART II.

Let no man think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think.

THAT golden mean between two extremes, where almoſt all the virtues are placed, is in hardly any caſe ſo difficult to fix upon as in that of modeſty; as it is extremely difficult to avoid having too low an opinion of ourſelves on the one hand, or too high an opinion on the other. It is not our preſent object to enquire, whether meanneſs of ſpirit, which ſoon becomes the effect of falſe ſhame; or vanity and impudence, are the moſt pernicious extremes?—It is ſufficient that they both lead to vices deſtructive of our happineſs, and pernicious to ſociety. A man is led into an eſtimate of his abilities, as he is to judge of the vigour and ſtrength of his body, by experience. According as that experience has been properly or improperly made, he judges accurately or inaccurately either of his abilities or of his bodily ſtrength. And the bravadoes of a coward, and the boaſtings of a vain pretender to genius and learning, proceed from cauſes exactly ſimilar. Indeed they generally accompany each other; for the vain man is ever, by his own account, not only a pro-

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digy of talents and virtue, but of perſonal proweſs and valour. This, beſides that it renders a man ridiculous, makes him a perpetual torment to himſelf; and not only uſeleſs, but a diſhonour and diſgrace to his friends.

The firſt conſequence of a falſe eſtimate of our abilities is a diſregard to truth: ſo that in proportion as a man is vain, he deviates in his judgment from truth; and in general he diſregards it. As truth is not the principle by which he directs his eſtimate of things, he finds any imperfect ideas he may occaſionally have of it, not only ufeleſs, but ever in his way, and extremely troubleſome. It is his buſineſs to diſregard and diſlike it. Hence the univerſal conſequence, which cannot have eſcaped us, that all vain men are liars.

This ſets them at variance with any degree of natural conſcience which they may have, and makes them ever ſeek for happineſs out of themſelves. The mind of a vain man is like the elements in a ſtorm; a diſcordant, unnatural principle is always agitating it; and he cannot but be a conſtant ſtranger to real peace and tranquility of mind. This is one reaſon why a vain man is ever flying out of himſelf, and flying out of his family, which is generally a faithful copy of a man's own mind; and is an eternal torment to his neighbourhood and to ſociety, by the impoſitions, fraud, and diſhoneſty, which are neceſſary to ſupport his character; and by the villainy and wretchedneſs which are the conſequences of his diſappointments.

The ſame cauſe which makes a vain man uneaſy in his own mind, and at variance with himſelf, makes him alſo at variance with the world; and become, in his real diſpoſition, peculiarly diſſocial and ſelfiſh. As vanity is deſtructive of perſonal truth and honour, and all private ſatisfaction and peace of mind; ſo it is of every ſocial principle. Not to dwell on the wretched ſtate of a family where a vain man preſides; where the condition of his mind is minutely traced: where he perſonates his ruling principle, and governs with the ſame arbitrary and cruel ſway with which vanity governs within him; where an amiable wife, or innocent children, are not only neglected, and deprived of the high advantages and ſweet felicity which ſpring from domeſtic equality, union, and love; but are kept in continual apprehenſion from the ſallies of an impetuous paſſion; are the conſtant, abject, trembling ſlaves of his humours, caprices, and wants; and the wretches on whom he ſeeks vengeance for his diſappointments and mortifications in the world. For though he aims to live only for the public, he is ever at enmity with the world; and there never exiſted a cynic, or a hermit, from croſſes and misfortunes, which bore mankind ſo perfect an hatred, as is borne by a man whoſe governing paſſion is vanity. No ſituation can well be conceived more truly infernal than that of a man whoſe ruling principle forces him into ſociety, and at the ſame time makes him deteſt almoſt every individual of that ſociety. If I were emphatically to deſcribe hell, as the moſt wretched habitation of men, I would not have recourſe to fire or brimſtone, the effects of which might frighten children; but would ſay it was the habitation of miſanthropes; of

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men who were obliged to live together, and yet moſt cordially hated each other. This implies every poſſible miſery to the human mind; and if the devil, who is ſaid to be the vaineſt, and conſequently the moſt malignant, of all beings, were allowed to aſſign their eternal lot, this would be their puniſhment; becauſe it would be their utmoſt miſery.

But as we ſhall ſee that miſery attends all the ſteps of this paſſion, and is ever wringing the heart of a vain man, in proportion to his vanity, we may ſuppoſe Satan himſelf would be ſatisfied, and not require his puniſhment in another world.—The ancients, who, by the fragments we have of their works, ſeem to have been as much ſuperior to us in morality, as we ſee they were in taſte and in the arts, made the chief and utmoſt happineſs of man to conſiſt in tranquility; which in the mind is the effect of order and harmony among the paſſions, and in ſociety is the pleaſing reſult of all the active and ſocial virtues.

The vain man, as we have already obſerved, never ſeeks his happineſs in himſelf; and, what may ſeem a paradox, though no man can be more ſelfiſh, yet no man loves himſelf leſs, or cares leſs for his own company. We will leave his family and near connections, as objects only of unavailing compaſſion, and attend him into the world, the theatre which he has choſen to riſque his whole fortune upon. We ſhall ſee him engaged in endleſs ſtratagems and projects to impoſe on mankind; and that his only hopes of ſucceſs are founded on their ignorance, cre-

dulity, and vices. Here he ſets out in the direct road to miſery. For it is the buſineſs and the happineſs of wiſdom to leſſen thoſe evils, which the vain man ſuppoſes it to be his intereſt to heighten and increaſe. But this may be a conſideration above his reach; and perhaps above the reach of thoſe who are in danger of treading in his ſteps. Yet the nature and conſequences of his commerce with the world may be eaſily comprehended, and may furniſh us with an uſeful leſſon.

The buſineſs of a vain man in ſociety engages him in eternal ſtratagems and wars with mankind. He firſt proceeds by impoſture, and exhibits his talents under generous pretences; but the eternal egotiſm and over-bearing aſſurance that attend them diſappoint his views; and he is left by the people to curſe them for ſeeing into his character. This obliges him to be for ever changing his circles; and this is the reaſon that we never ſee vain men long connected or acquainted with the ſame people.

This may be called his intellectual commerce with the world, which his vanity renders unprofitable to it. For though men may be glad to be informed; yet they love not to be documented: and they judge rightly, when they think that the difference between one man and another is in fact inconſiderable; that it may in ſome few caſes entitle one man to reſpect from another, for his talents and induſtry; but can in no caſe give him a right to domineer over and inſult him. If, therefore, a vain man ſhould poſſeſs genius and knowledge, he loſes the bleſſing and reward of them, which are the reſpect and admi-

of the world: nay, he is ever ſuſpected of not poſſeſſing what he actually does poſſeſs; for having been diſcovered as a pretender in ſome ſciences, he is ſuppoſed and ſpoken of as a pretender in all. Here he is diſappointed in his warmeſt expectations; and the paſſions that tear his heart on the occaſion, are not the moſt conducive to the happineſs of a man.

In his moral commerce, his principle is deceit; and his virtues are therefore all prodigies: but they are prodigies which exiſt only in tales and novels of his own making. Hardly any virtue can be mentioned in the hearing of a vain man, but he relates tranſactions of his own, which put common actions to ſhame. Hypocriſy, therefore, is the neceſſary effect of vanity; and leads a man into the exhibition of falſe virtues, which bring on improper connections, inſincere friendſhip, expectations which cannot be fulfilled, and a thouſand other cauſes of future diſagreement and wretchedneſs.

When religion had credit enough to ſerve as a cloak to infirmities and vices, the vain man was always religious, and covered his pretences with it. But now an undefineable and unintelligible matter, called ſentiment, is the ſubſtitute. All we know of what is commonly called ſentiment is, that it ſupplies the place of wiſdom and virtue; and is a rule of life, which every man and woman keeps in ſome elegant receſs of the mind: that it vibrates, like a muſical inſtrument, and all the events of life play upon it: but, being totally different in different perſons, it admits of that wonderful mixture of wiſdom and folly, virtue and vice, which we ſee around us. There is no virtue

refined enough for its regard; and no vice which it will not admit of:—in ſhort, by ſetting aſide the uſe of inveſtigation, reaſon, education, habit, and reflection—ſentiment becomes the very principle of profligacy; and by its ineffable and ſupernatural emotions, renders the mind abandoned and worthleſs.

Here, therefore, if any where, vanity muſt have a chance of ſucceſs. As ſentimental virtues exiſt only in tales, letters, and converſation, where the imagination is at liberty to invent, and no more judgment is neceſſary than to preſerve probability; one would think a vain man, who is eſſentially a liar, muſt find his account in this ſentimental commerce. He does, ſo as to impoſe on men longer in this way than in any other. The ſtrong propenſities, which are formed in good minds by the ſocial virtues, diſpoſe men to admire all appearances of them; and to be eaſily impoſed upon by pretenſions to extraordinary degrees of them. They are only perſons of mature judgments and underſtandings, who ſteadily diſbelieve ſupernatural efforts, and ſuſpect all prodigies and all wonders. Sentimental friends are like fiends in maſks, who paſs on each other for angels: but when time, ardour, and the irreſiſtible deſire of mutual intercourſe, bring on a diſcovery and pull off the covering, hardly any thing can equal the diſappointment: they fly from each other with horrid deteſtation; and nothing can exceed the rancour and malignity of theſe ſeparated ſentimental friends. Indeed there is not a virtue of importance to ſociety, which can long exiſt, or remain uninjured, when aſſociated with vanity. Truth, both as a quality in the mind, and as a ſocial virtue, is the firſt obſtacle

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it muſt remove. Juſtice it can have no idea of; becauſe it ſeeks its own gratification at all events; and benevolence is eradicated by ſelfiſhneſs.

It was vanity that firſt made religion, what it has been for ages, a diſhonour to the human underſtanding, the very inſtrument of ignorance and darkneſs, and the ſtrongeſt impediment to knowledge and virtue, the tool of tyranny, and the pretence for all kinds of public and private injuſtice, barbarity, and villainy. The man who had firſt the vanity and inſolence to ſay to another, "you muſt ſee with my eyes, hear with my ears, "and judge by my underſtanding," laid the foundation of that enormous maſs of gloomy ignorance and wickedneſs, which, under the name of religion, for many ages, overwhelmed mankind; which ſcience and philoſophy have been long demoliſhing; and through the ruins of which we are now laborioufly forcing our way. Great caution ſhould attend our ſteps; for the building was enormous, and there are nodding piles which ever threaten us with deſtruction. Wiſdom only is our guide; and our conſolation is, that wiſdom has often raſed the edifices of folly; and ſubdued monſters, hydras, and chimeras. Vanity was the direct parent of intolerance and perſecution; it produced ignorance, ſuperſtition, and all the evils which have attended them.

I might ſhew the effects of vanity in the uſe of riches, as it makes them a plague inſtead of a bleſſing to their poſſeſſors; how

how it renders beauty a ſnare; hardens vice by impudence; and covers even ſhame with aſſurance. But I imagine enough has been ſaid to contraſt vanity with the virtue of modeſty, which we conſidered in the laſt lecture; and to convince you, on the whole, that it is of ſerious importance, we ſhould not think of ourſelves more highly than we ought to think.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXV.

MODERATION. PART I.

Let your moderation be known unto all men.

IT is difficult to engage the attention of men on ſubjects which they apprehend to be common ones; and which they imagine they underſtand.

This is the reaſon that all lawgivers, both religious and civil, have found it expedient, in their particular plans, to annex motives to thoſe which had been provided by nature; and the ſucceſs of a religion, or of a plan of policy, has been ever in proportion to the nature and number of thoſe motives which it propoſed. There is hardly any thing, in the government of Almighty God, ſo wonderful, as the apparent latitude which is left in all caſes to alter and change the tendencies which he has given to things. When we determine on principles and laws, we are obliged to make them abſolute, or they will be ineffectual. We endanger them by admitting the ſmalleſt variations; and muſt guard againſt every attempt to counteract them. This is not

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the caſe with the principles of nature, and the determinations of God. There is no doubt but the univerſe is actuated by uniform and certain principles, or that God governs the world by ſomething analogous to laws, which invariably have their great and general effects: but they admit of ſuch deviations in little matters, that little minds are apt to be puzzled; to loſe ſight of the general order, beauty, and happineſs, which are the effects of general laws; and to confine their attention to thoſe ſmall, apparent inſtances of diſorder and miſery, which ariſe from that latitude and freedom in the great outlines of the divine government, the effects of which we comprehend only as our views of it enlarge and improve. We ſee, accordingly, that men are moſt diſſatisfied with God's works, and moſt preſumptuous in altering, changing, and amending, when they are moſt ignorant of them: we ſee that periods of intellectual and ſcientific darkneſs have always been moſt fruitful of prodigies, miracles, and other pretended inroads on the divine plan; that artful men have raiſed themſelves into Gods, and affected to rectify the miſtakes of the Deity, in his arrangements of nature, and proviſions for its happineſs, when the world around them were ſunk into ignorance of thoſe arrangements: we ſee that when knowledge, like the dawning day, is gradually ſpreading its light, and exhibiting nature, fair and beautiful as it is, all circumſtances of this kind, as the morning clouds or early dews, are paſſing away. Theſe pretended wonders; theſe tranſactions, which call in queſtion the original laws of nature, and the eternal and invariable government of God; theſe are the tranſactions of darkneſs and of night—when the ſun has once ariſen; when we have

have eyes to ſee and ears to hear and underſtandings to comprehend, none of theſe Deities and Semi-deities dare approach us: for their deeds and pretenſions would be made known. As the natural day diſſipates the phantoms and prodigies which the imagination torments itſelf with in darkneſs; and, by enabling us to view nature, engages us to adore it: ſo the light of philoſophy and reaſon, by gradually exhibiting to us the principles of the divine government, leads us to diſregard and deſpiſe thoſe ſuperſtitious chimeras and blaſphemies, whoſe tendency is to leſſen their credit and effect. However, as men have been accuſtomed, I will not ſay to ſupernatural, but to unnatural, motives, ſome attention is to be paid to the ſtate of their minds, or they cannot be brought into the calm and natural paths of real virtue and happineſs. To exhibit, before the perverted underſtanding of a modern religioniſt, the reaſons of a manly conduct, would be like exhibiting reaſons of his duty before the moſt ſtupid of all animals: for the one has been accuſtomed to move occaſionally towards heaven, under the caſual operation of temptations and terrors; and the other to move in his labour by actual chaſtiſement, or by obſerving the inſtrument of it.

To have your faculties in their natural order and vigour; to hold your place as a member of ſociety; to act uprightly and well in it; and to find your happineſs in the happineſs of the whole—theſe are the views of a man:—it is not poſſible for a human being—for an angel—with reverence be it ſpoken—for Almighty God himſelf—to have nobler motives of action. Offer

theſe to the degraded, though proud and haughty, votaries of religion, as motives to virtuous actions; you will not gain their attention. Tell them they will be damned, if they do not perform certain rites—"Ay, that's a motive!" they'll ſay.—It is the aſs's whip, and they'll move only while they tingle with the pain. It is time to be aſhamed of theſe things. It has ever been the language of impoſture and of tyranny, that men are to be held in this degraded and diſhonourable view; and in order to enſlave and govern them as brutes, they have ever been ſpoken of and treated as ſuch. Our buſineſs is with men, and our pleaſure their happineſs; kings and prieſts only have an intereſt and delight in the ignorance and miſery of mankind.—We muſt regret, however, that when we ſpeak to men as men, delineate their duties, and ſhew the beſt reaſons and motives for them, we have a chance of being underſtood or attended to by very few perſons. The proceſs of cauſes and effects, in the natural world, are not more regular and methodical than in the moral world. Nothing happens, nothing ariſes but in the order of nature, unleſs it be now and then a monſter; and that is only an apparent and trifling deviation: nothing can come to paſs, without its aſſigned and proper cauſe.

Moral happineſs, the higheſt poſſible object of the human wiſh, deſire, and aim; which not only renders our actual exiſtence worth having; but inſpires us with poetic frenzy; makes us create imaginary worlds; and extend our exiſtence into Paradiſe, Elyſium, and Heaven, to perpetuate our enjoyments—this univerſal idol, and univerſal motive of purſuit and action, wants on-

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ly to be underſtood, to be enjoyed. We do worſe than loſe our time, if we ſeek it at a diſtance, and in imaginary regions; for it is with us, and every moment is ſacred to its pleaſures. It is the effect of order, vigour, activity in the principles of our minds, which conſtitutes our virtue: it is the reſult of a natural and juſt diſpoſition of men and principles in ſociety, which conſtitutes public virtue; and this reſult is the effect of cauſes, as regular, as certain, as neceſſary, as thoſe which produce day and night, and ſummer and winter. If all men were capable of comprehending the order of nature in the moral world, all men would be virtuous. Rewards and puniſhments are the expedients of ignorance and vice; and they will as ſoon produce day and night, and ſummer and winter, as they will true and genuine moral happineſs, in any one inſtance. You are not to wonder that when I tell you temperance or moderation is neceſſary to the right arrangement of all your faculties; to that natural order of your principles and affections which makes you virtuous; to fit you for your proper ſtation in ſociety, where all the principles which unite you ſhould be ſo reſtrained and tempered as to harmonize, coaleſce, and produce an effect, which alone is real happineſs:—you are not to wonder, when I ſay this, I ſhould ſuppoſe myſelf entitled to your attention: for I hold before you the utmoſt attainment of man, in its proper and only place, where alone it is poſſible to obtain it: nay, I hold it before you when your minds are calm; when reaſon, unmoleſted by hopes and fears, can clearly ſee and judge; and when alone the mind ſhould chuſe and determine. The delirium of the paſſions, like intoxication from liquors, is unfriendly to the judg-

ment; and thoſe who canvaſs for heaven, merely by the hopes and fears of men worked into frenzies, are juſt ſuch moraliſts, and juſt ſuch honeſt men, as thoſe politicians, who intoxicate their conſtituents, to enable them to make a right and judicious choice of ſenators and legiſlators. As the cauſes are the ſame, we ſhould expect that the effects would be the ſame; and that heaven, like ſome ſynods, conclaves, and public aſſemblies, would, on their plan, be occupied principally by ſuch perſons, as no honeſt and virtuous man would wiſh to keep company with.

Moderation is that temper in all the principles and affections of the mind, which, while it admits of their vigour and activity, never ſuffers them to waſte themſelves, to obſtruct and injure each other, and to diſturb its harmony and virtue, by exceſs. It draws that undefinable, but certain, boundary, which limits each paſſion, while all the paſſions appear to be blended together. As, in painting, the artiſt who cannot adjuſt the preciſe ſpot where the ſtrength of his colours ſhould lie, and where they ſhould ſoften into each other and unite, will never produce harmony or beauty; ſo the moraliſt, without that temperate judgment, which keeps affections in their proper places, will never produce moral beauty, moral virtue, or enjoy real happineſs. In the firſt caſe, the obvious effect of one colour prevailing over and ſtaining the reſt, is to give the appearance of daubing, confuſion, and to render the object diſguſtful; ſo, in the other, the prevalence of one principle, or paſſion, over all the reſt, has the effect of one univerſal blot on the beauty of the mind, and is unnatural, injurious, and offenſive.

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So much attention is neceſſary, to keep in their order thoſe numerous principles which actuate us, that we hardly ever expect it from any man. We ſuppoſe that all men are fallen in this reſpect; and we only enquire what are the ſins which moſt eaſily beſet them; we judge of them according to the nature of their paſſions, and to the tendency of thoſe paſſions to be of greater or leſſer injury to the world. Indeed, this muſt be the caſe, where education is ſo little underſtood, and ſo much neglected, as among us; and where the parts and principles of the mind are either formed at random, or with unnatural and vicious views. We ſet out in life halt and blind; every thing within us is in diſorder; a croud of ſavage and unruly diſpoſitions are contending for ſway; and happy is the man who, at the leaſt expence of his virtue, can ſhelter himſelf under the leaſt cruel and injurious of them!

Thus one man arranges himſelf under thoſe appetites which direct him to his food; and determines, in the hurry of a brutal choice, that he will live to eat and drink. This kind of exceſs has almoſt appropriated to itſelf the name of intemperance. Whether we are yet ſo little removed from brutes as to be generally addicted to it; or whether the common meaning of terms was given at a rude and early period, when this was the general vice, is a queſtion we need not now enter upon. We have ſufficient inſtances of it, to prove the neceſſity of moderation, in the uſe of thoſe appetites which firſt influence and actuate us.

In modern morality, the formation and government of thoſe appetites which firſt affect us, and by which we ſupport life; the

the manner of giving them an intereſt and a power of adminiſtering to our pleaſure; is wholly dependent on a queſtion in education, which has not yet been decided by the beſt writers on the ſubject. It is the univerſal cuſtom, in families and ſchools, to make the deſire of food, not, what nature deſigned, the reaſon for giving it, but the inſtrument of obedience and induſtry in any purſuits ſuggeſted to children. The philoſopher, who leads the way, both in new thoughts and new paradoxes on this ſubject; that wiſe, enchanting, whimſical guide, Mr. Rouſſeau, has given his ſanction to this practice. It appears, however, unnatural, unphiloſophical, and injurious, on many accounts. In the firſt place, upon his own principles, many of which he derives from nature, no child ſhould be led into ſuch purſuits as to require the force of theſe appetites to impel him. The father, or tutor, who is obliged to apply any kind of force to the mind of his child, is in the common ſituation of a woman, who has, through inattention and indolence, entangled her threads, and is obliged to ſeparate them by violence. It may be true, that force may be neceſſary, in perverſe ſituations; but it ſhould never be exhibited by philoſophical writers as a real and natural principle. It is the miſerable, but neceſſary, expedient of ignorance and lazineſs. This method of rewarding and puniſhing children, by means of meat and drink, is not only unnatural and unphiloſophical; but it has ſeveral obvious and injurious conſequences. It has been the principal means of giving a brutal caſt to the characters of modern nations. By making the firſt duties of life, and all the charming affections which blend a family together; by making induſtry, learning, philoſophy, and

virtue,

virtue, the means in children of getting meat and drink, is moſt injudiciouſly ſubjecting great things to ſmall; and is the reaſon that in modern nations all things are ſubſervient to theſe appetites; and that a brutal intemperance has been their reproach and diſhonour. Though wiſdom and philoſophy have checked the enormity of this vice, and it is not now a matter of diſtinction and glory to be a glutton or a drunkard; yet it is far from being an occaſion of reproach. It never will be, while intemperance is the vice of much the greater number of the people; and this will be the caſe, while it is the practice in education to make the gratification of the loweſt appetites the reward and end of all ſcience and all duty.

This is the manner in which a diſpoſition and habit of, intemperance, are formed in almoſt all the world, It is by a proper attention to this circumſtance, we may prevent an evil, the conſequences of which cannot well be enumerated or eſtimated. The habit of fixing the mind ultimately on what we ſhall eat and what we ſhall drink; and of eſtimating all intellectual and moral attainments as they lead to thoſe employments, does, in all caſes, more or leſs, pervert the underſtanding, while the gratification of intemperate deſires undermines the health, and gradually deſtroys the conſtitution.

I need not deſcant on the obvious effects of intemperance, in order to recommend moderation in the gratification of our firſt appetites. Theſe have been well known, or have been often ably deſcribed to you. I wiſh to lead you to the ſources of evils,

where alone we may remedy them. This may often appear long journey, and may require an accurate attention to minute ſprings. But the man, who either will not or cannot take it, may buſtle through this world at hazard; but can never have a reaſonable and general proſpect of making himſelf and thoſe who belong to him virtuous and happy.

The ſubject of moderation and temperance, in the way I mean to treat it, is of great importance and extent; I ſhall therefore reſume it on another occaſion.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXVI.

MODERATION. PART II.

Let your moderation be known unto all men.

WE have already conſidered this principle in morals, as it regulates thoſe appetites which firſt affect and intereſt us. Moderation in eating and drinking is allowed to be neceſſary to health; it is ſuppoſed to be favourable to knowledge and virtue; and it is eſtimated as of ſome importance.

Next to thoſe appetites which preſerve our beings, are the paſſions which unite us in ſociety; and which enable us to ſuſtain our ſeveral parts as members of families. The habit of living together; the mutual advantages and happineſs ariſing from mutual benefits and ſervices; with that undefinable enthuſiaſm, which ariſes from a ſenſe of kindred, and which is called natural affection—theſe diſpoſitions form a family paſſion, which requires to be reſtrained and tempered by moderation. It is apt to become a complex kind of ſelfiſhneſs; and it then leads to many inconveniencies and crimes. Thoſe feuds among families, which deſtroy the harmony and peace of neighbourhoods;

which occaſion hatred, injuſtice, and injuries, is owing to an exceſs of this family affection; which, in itſelf, and tempered by moderation, is extremely uſeful. But as this exceſs is not the common vice of our times, I ſhall paſs on to that which is; and which indeed has been that of all times.

It may be neceſſary to tread with caution on delicate ground. There are paſſions, the effects of which have been ſo equally divided between vice and virtue, that their natures have been rendered equivocal. There are ſome which have been generally, in ignorant and ſavage times, ſo ill-formed, ſo ill-directed, and the cauſes of ſo many vices which are offenſive to the mind, imagination, and heart, that they can hardly be mentioned without injury. Such is the natural, neceſſary, indiſpenſable attachment between man and woman. What moraliſt would dare, in a public aſſembly, to conſider its cauſes, principles, and effects?—ſo much barbariſm and ſavage impunity remain in our minds. In ignorant, brutal periods of ſociety, and in equally ignorant, debilitated, ſentimental periods—for the two extremes meet—this paſſion is either every thing, or it is nothing. When it rules a fierce and uncultivated mind, it leads into extravagancies which no madneſs can exceed; when it actuates enervated, but equally unprincipled, minds, it leads into extravagancies, not ſo injurious, not ſo brutal; but more ridiculous, and more difficult to be corrected. In both caſes, it is at enmity with wiſdom, truth, honour, and every moral virtue; and it is, more than any thing, a foe to that happineſs, which it was, more than any thing, intended to promote. And yet no man of God, no

meſſenger

meſſenger of heaven, dare make it the ſubject of his leſſons and inſtructions; no parent can make it the ſubject of converſation with his ſon or his daughter; and all the world ſeem agreed to let this paſſion prowl the earth at hazard; without enquiring whence it came; whither it goes; or whether, like all the other principles of nature, it may be rendered regular and uſeful.

We have reaſon to think that this was not the caſe in the more enlightened periods of antiquity, when children were brought up leſs like common animals than they are at this time; and, of conſequence, were leſs likely to act as ſuch in future life. We draw this concluſion principally from a knowledge of their languages; in ſome of which there are terms and phraſes, referring to the paſſion we are now conſidering, which prove it to have been a moral object, and a matter of converſation and inſtruction. There is hardly any criterion more deciſive of the moral as well as intellectual improvement of nations, than the ſtate of their languages: and the determinations of it are not favourable to the pretenſions of the moderns, who have long affected, in religion and morals eſpecially, to look back on antiquity with contempt. This has been a matter of queſtion and diſcuſſion; but it has generally reſted on improper facts. The productions of the moderns are in being, in great numbers, and eaſily ſpecified; but thoſe of the ancients are only in fragments, very ſcarce, and difficult to be produced; and yet, to reaſon by way of analogy even from theſe fragments, they have an evident and great ſuperiority: but the matter is clearly decided to thoſe who underſtand the ancient and modern languages.—

The intellectual and moral ſuperiority of the ancients above the moderns will ever be clear, while their languages are acknowledged to be ſuperior, in ſimplicity, ſtrength, conciſeneſs, purity, and expreſſion. But this is not our preſent object. We have nothing more to do with it, than as it helps us in the difficult taſk of knowing ourſelves. If we judge of our attainments, both intellectual and moral, by the ſtate of our languages; which are many of them grounded on uncertain principles; conſtructed without deſign; abounding with barbariſms, impurities, and indecencies; we ſhall ſee no reaſon for that ſuperciliouſneſs which has ſo long diſhonoured our knowledge and religion; and which has conſigned to hell, for ignorance and vice, men who ſeem to have been every way, and greatly, ſuperior to us. We ſee, by the languages of theſe people, that they were not reduced, as we are, to the cruel neceſſity of truſting to hazard, in the moſt important period of life; that when their youth were fit to enter into ſociety, they were prepared with the ideas, views, and inclinations of men, and not merely with the appetites of brutes; that they had a ſolemnity to mark that period; a dreſs to put on; and a language which was ſuited to it. I own I know no circumſtance, in all hiſtory, more humiliating to our pride. When I have imagined a matron of antiquity, whoſe buſineſs and pleaſure was in her family; with ſenſe, virtue, and delicacy, to form, regulate, and direct to the nobleſt and beſt ends, a principle, which, from ignorance, from low and vicious habits of thinking, we leave out of our morality; I have been mortified with ſhame for the preſent credit of my fellow-creatures. There was no principle in ancient morality

more ſacred, more important, than this affection; which is the firſt corner-ſtone of a future edifice; that on which almoſt the whole of a man's character and happineſs will depend. The difference between wiſdom and folly; between virtuous and vicious periods of ſociety, is in nothing more remarkable, than that in the former men are ſerious on things of important and ſerious conſequences; and in the latter on trifles. A propoſition of this kind—that the real characters of men and women; that their virtue and happineſs through life, depend on the manner of forming and regulating that principle, that affection, which alone ſhould unite them—this, to a wiſe and virtuous aſſembly of men, whoſe concern was directed to preſent things, and not to future ſhadows, would be conſidered with mature and ſacred attention—offer it to a modern aſſembly, in the moſt enlightened parts of Chriſtendom, where men affect to be ſublimely perfect in their knowledge of morals and religion, and you will ſee ignorant and ſavage contempt on the countenances of the greater part of them; you will ſee, that all the aſſociations of ideas excited by your terms, are thoſe of perſons who have been accuſtomed to think and act like brutes; and that, inſtead of doing them ſervice, you are only furniſhing their depraved imaginations with an opportunity of further injuring their corrupted hearts.

Though we think there is nothing in heaven or earth of ſo much importance to men as the right formation of this principle, which creates the firſt, and perhaps the only, real and perfectfr iendſhip; which forms ſociety; actuates it; and gives riſe to all its principles, all its duties, and all its happineſs: yet we ſhould

ſhould think it imprudent to dwell on the ſubject. The preſent ſtate of moral knowledge is ſuch; men have ſo lately turned their attention, from religious and ſentimental romance, to the real buſineſs of life, and the contemplation and ſtudy of human nature; that they would affect to ridicule where they ought to be aſhamed; and laugh where they ought to weep. We muſt only ſay, then, in general terms, that until this principle be conſidered as the firſt and moſt important moral object; until parents can form and direct it with mild and judicious wiſdom; things muſt continue as they now are: and the moſt malignant ſpirit could not wiſh them worſe; he could not wiſh the greater number of men and women more degraded; a greater havoc made on all their great and good qualities; or to ſee them more truly curſed and miſerable, than they are rendered by the very principle which was to have contributed more than any thing to their wiſdom, virtue, and happineſs.

The next ſtep, in the progreſs of the human mind, leads it into ſome danger from ambition. When families are formed, and the heads and repreſentatives of them act as parts of the public; a deſire of diſtinction; of the public eſteem; and what is called glory, is naturally produced. This, when it riſes into ambition, requires the reſtraints of moderation: for, by the inconveniencies and miſchiefs it has occaſioned, its utility has been queſtioned; and its advocates and votaries have been content with calling it the vice of noble minds: the meaning of which is, that it is a vice which does injuries on a large ſcale; and inſtead of being employed, as other vices are, in deſtroying the peace of indivi-

duals

duals and private families, it enſlaves, or depopulates, or deluges with blood, whole provinces and whole nations. It muſt be owned to be the exceſs of a noble principle: that emulation in great and worthy actions; that deſire of being foremoſt in defending or ſerving our country, or even in puniſhing its foes; that high and commendable inclination of being eſteemed and honoured by multitudes, and even nations, whom we have made happy—if this be ambition, it is the nobleſt virtue of the nobleſt mind: but the perverſion of it into that wayward, impetuous, unjuſt, and cruel principle, called by that name, is a moſt deteſtable and injurious vice. Here we ſee very conſpicuouſly the office of reaſon, in moderating and adjuſting the paſſions. In a mind properly formed, whoſe principles are natural and good, ambition takes the lead, and dares all hazards and difficulties in great, beneficent, and public ſervices. In a mind whoſe principles and views are diſordered and evil, ambition takes the lead, and overcomes all dangers and difficulties in ravaging and laying waſte the world.

As the moral characters of communities and empires have been hitherto vicious and infamous; as the principles by which they have been actuated towards each other are the baſeſt and moſt diſhonourable; as thoſe who may be deemed their repreſentatives, whether called governors, conſuls, kings, or emperors, with the ſame diſpoſitions and conduct in private life, would have died by the hands of the common executioner—we are not to wonder that public paſſions are every where public evils; and that men have been the admiration and aſtoniſhment of vicious communities,

munities, becauſe they were the moſt ſucceſsful villains in them. Thus the character of Alexander is that of an impetuous, daring, and ſucceſsful robber; and his army was a diſciplined banditti, which ravaged, plundered, and ſpread deſolation and miſery round the world. But all other nations, all other armies, and almoſt all other princes, being equally deſtitute of juſtice, honour, and a love of mankind; there has never been a criterion to judge of public men by, except ſucceſs: Alexander, therefore, is glorious in proportion to the quantity of miſchief he has produced. The long liſt of heroes and conquerors, from Jupiter to Cæſar, to Charlemagne, and to the poliſhed and mathematic butchers of the preſent times, is a liſt of worthleſs and bad men; of men whoſe minds have been intoxicated by falſe views of glory; and employed talents, that might have bleſſed, in injuring the world. The earth has been hitherto like one great, uncultivated foreſt; where lions and tygers and wolves have prowled; where all power and glory and prey have been allotted by brutal ſtrength, cruelty, and ſtratagem; and where all the virtues have been checked, controuled, and rendered ineffectual, by a ferocious avarice, and a ſavage ambition.

It is therefore of importance to the whole world, that all the public paſſions, and particularly ambition, ſhould be moderated and regulated by truth, honour, juſtice, and beneficence; that it ſhould be the inſtrument of reaſon and virtue, for the public happineſs; and not of folly and vice, for the public miſery.

The next ſtep, in the progreſs of the mind, leads us into danger from avarice: for when we have eſcaped the ſhoals of love;

love; the immenſe cliffs and precipices of ambition; there ſtill remains a paſſion, which may greatly leſſen our uſefulneſs and happineſs; and the influence of which will be encreaſed upon us by thoſe things which weaken that of others. Old age, and even the views of death, heighten the paſſion of avarice. It is neceſſary, therefore, that our love of riches ſhould be moderated early, and ſhould be checked and regulated through life. The influence of this paſſion is ſo general, and the miſchiefs ariſing from it are ſo great, that it may be wondered more care is not taken in forming and adjuſting it in young minds. The world ſeems in this matter to be divided; and each diviſion to be governed by a maxim—the one is, that a love of riches, and a conſtant attention to the means of acquiring them, cannot be too early and too carefully inculcated: the other is, that the mind is to be entirely left without the leaſt attention to this matter; which is too apt to get poſſeſſion of it, and lead it into meanneſs and miſery. Theſe two maxims divide almoſt all our young people into two claſſes, which are placed at two extremes; but which are made to meet at laſt in one point.—The boy, who trudges from his childhood in the trammels of extreme frugality, wears them through life, as he wears his cloaths, from neceſſity and habit. The youth, who is ſuffered to begin his life in diſſipation and extravagance, becomes a prey to roguery, is involved in misfortunes, and flies to avarice from neceſſity. In this manner, the laſt years of moſt men's lives are tormented by a reſtleſs and inſatiable paſſion, when they ought to be wearing away in quietneſs and peace; and, like a ſummer evening, calmly and ſweetly cloſing a torrid and tumultuous day.

The desire of riches, for use, convenience, and beneficence, is natural and commendable. It should therefore by no means be neglected. The danger, we see, is in rendering it immoderate, and animating it with improper views, or leaving it wholly out of the mind. When men are accustomed to desire and to use riches as means to proper and good ends, they form a principle in their minds which is commendable and virtuous. When they are taught to desire riches without any views but those of vanity and avarice, they are taught to cultivate a principle which is injurious to themselves as well as to others.

Avarice is the excess of this desire, however it be produced: and we see the use and expedience of moderating, regulating, and adjusting it to its place—by the appearance of wretchedness, which is stamped on the countenance of the man who is governed by it—by its encroachments on honesty, humanity, beneficence, and every virtue which can benefit and bless mankind.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXVII.

MODERATION. PART III.

Let your moderation be known unto all men.

WE cannot properly quit this ſubject, without taking notice of thoſe exceſſes into which religious paſſions are apt to run; and ſome of the inconveniencies and evils which they occaſion.

When we ſay that temperance, or moderation is that order of the paſſions and principles of the mind; that arrangement and reſtraint of them to their reſpective offices, which is the effect of reaſon; we deſcribe a quality or virtue, whoſe peculiar province ſeems to be religion.

Religion is a word of extenſive application. It is, in the beſt ſenſe of it, the moral effect of the ſublimeſt and moſt perfect knowledge; it is a well-informed underſtanding, exhibited in its duties; it is the human reaſon copying and imitating the divine, from an extenſive and accurate knowledge of nature; and cultivating, with chearful devotion, that wiſdom and goodneſs which are evident

in all the works of God. This is the religion of a rational being; and as it is the effect of the moſt extenſive knowledge, and the beſt exerciſe of reaſon, that calm moderation and temperance which we have deſcribed are eſſential to it. For we cannot mean, by moderation, any thing which abates the natural vigour and ardour of any genuine principle or affection. This would be an injury, and not a benefit. Where the affections and principles, excited by the contemplation and ſtudy of nature, are right and good, no reſtraint is to be laid on them, which would abate their genuine ardour, or leſſen the pleaſure ariſing from them: the office of reaſon would be only to keep them in thoſe ſituations, where they might exert themſelves with moſt freedom and moſt effect. It is neceſſary that we ſhould bear this in mind, in all other caſes, as well as in religion; or we ſhall be apt to fall into the common miſapprehenſion of this virtue, and claſs it among thoſe cold and ſevere enemies to our happineſs which we are to avoid. In all the paſſions which are natural, and which alone adminiſter real and exquiſite pleaſure; the office of reaſon is like that of a wiſe, liberal, chearful, and not of a niggardly, miſerable, œconomiſt. As the man, who ſquanders his money without a plan and deſign, loſes conſiderably in the pleaſure of ſpending it: ſo the man, who, as it were, ſquanders his paſſions, loſes unſpeakably in the quantity of pleaſure which he might enjoy from them. Here moderation drops the idea of reſtraint; and is diveſted of all diſcipline and ſeverity. It arranges the paſſions in their proper places; points to the utmoſt bounds within which they can exert themſelves without injury; and is the very miniſter of our pleaſures.

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This definition may be moſt aptly applied to that office of reaſon which orders our religious affections. I call them affections; becauſe I conſider religion to be rather ſeated in the heart than in the underſtanding; and to be the reſult of enquiry, knowledge, and wiſdom; and not, accurately and philoſophically ſpeaking, to conſiſt of them. This diſtinction is of great importance at the preſent period, when the ſciences are purſued as detached branches, and are not brought to terminate in ſome great, ſome general, ſome moral effect: when we ſee philoſophers laborioufly digging, like moles; and, like moles, withdrawing, juſt as they approach the light. The preſent purſuits of knowledge are of no uſe to the preſent generation. They have no effect on the moral diſpoſitions of thoſe who are engaged in them; and they are not carried on with a view to thoſe concluſions and principles which alone can be of benefit to the world. Men ramble through earth and ſea and air for informations and facts; ſome ſpecimens of which they lay up to be viewed in repoſitories and muſeums; and others they relate as inſtances of human depravity, which they have imitated, and which may be adopted here to diverſify the pleaſures of their friends. The genuine wiſdom of a Solon, or a Socrates, would have ordered ſuch things to be deſtroyed, and all records of them to be eraſed from the public view: they would have called on men of genius and abilities, to have raiſed their minds from facts into principles; and to regard, as their ultimate objects, thoſe of morality, policy, and religion; any one of which has a thouſand times greater effect on the happineſs of mankind, than all the curious collections and repoſitories in the world. If the univerſal opinion be

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a true one, that the public morals, at this time and in this country, are degenerating; that the people are ſinking into a brutal profligacy; and that the government is prudently accommodating itſelf to ſuch an event—in the name of God, where are our philoſophers?—Send Virtue in ſearch of them, and ſhe will return with regret and ſhame; having left them in the train of venality and corruption, or making collections to be monuments of their daſtardlineſs to ſome future wretches, or to be kicked about and deſtroyed in the firſt commotions of the public. All knowledge, which has no reſult, no religious, moral, or political effect, is inſignificant, as the amuſements which parents aſſign to children to keep them from crying, and merely to employ them. It becomes valuable, when it leads men to act wiſely and well: it becomes religion, when the contemplation of the higheſt and beſt deſigns in nature excite affections in the mind, the objects of which are the wiſeſt means by which the greateſt happineſs can be produced. Theſe affections cannot be too ſtrong; for they are the effects of the moſt extenſive knowledge: and they are not ſubject to diſorder and extravagance; for the very cauſe which produced them would ever keep them in their proper bounds.—So that all exceſſive and extravagant paſſions, which aſſume religious names, are either wholly, or in part, falſe and dangerous. Here it is of the utmoſt importance we ſhould diſtinguiſh between that enthuſiaſm which is genuine; which is the ardour of thoſe affections excited by the contemplation and knowledge of nature; and the paroxyſms of ſpurious paſſions, which are called enthuſiaſm, and which ſpring from partial and imperfect knowledge, or from actual ignorance. The one

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is the vital, animating warmth of the moſt ſublime and perfect mind: in ſcience it gives genius; in morals it furniſhes all the virtues, and all the exquiſite and real happineſs of man:—the other is like the unnatural and violent heat of a fever; which parches and deſtroys while it actuates; and whoſe momentary, falſe, and delirious enjoyments are ſucceeded by laſting and real miſery. But ſimiles often delude; and they are often the ſtratagems with which men, who have more fancy than genius, dazzle and amuſe where they cannot inform. All real and permanent benefit muſt be derived from an accurate, clear, and philoſophical detail of cauſes and effects; and we muſt perfectly underſtand the difference between real and ſpurious enthuſiaſm, or real and ſpurious affections in religion, before we can ſafely direct the indulgence of the one ſort, and the reſtraint of the other. Thoſe warm and lively ſentiments we conceive of wiſdom, truth, juſtice, and beneficence, from an extenſive and accurate knowledge of the works of God; or rather that ardent, ſublime, aſtoniſhing ſentiment, which is the general reſult of them; which is the very principle of true genius; which is the ſoul of true religion; and which gives all the virtues and pleaſures of life:—this is real enthuſiaſm; this is a natural effect of regular and natural cauſes. This requires no reſtraint; it is liable to no exceſſes; and moderation is eſſential to its formation.—Thoſe ſentiments we conceive on partial, imperfect, and wrong views of nature; thoſe unnatural paſſions, which are formed in us, for opinions which we adopt from mean or ſelfiſh hopes and fears; and that violent and miſchievous frenzy which is the general reſult:—this is falſe enthuſiaſm; it is inconſiſtent with, it

is deſtructive of, real genius and true religion; it has ever been at enmity with all the moral virtues, and with all the real happineſs of mankind.

Truth, in all caſes, is one ſimple and clear object. The imitations of it are generally very numerous. True and genuine religion, the affectionate and moral reſult of knowledge in a well-formed mind, is the attainment only of a few, a very few, real philoſophers; and not the numerous frigid, mean, and worthleſs ſectaries of philoſophic denominations. It is only in proportion as a man has knowledge; as that knowledge forms natural and moral ſentiments, that he can be truly ſaid to be religious; or indeed be ſaid to be good for any thing. And yet almoſt all men pretend to be religious. All men, except the drudges of ſome inferior ſciences, wiſh to be conſidered as religious In general they are extremely aſſured and audacious in their claims of diſtinction on this account. But religion with them is a thing very different from that we have repreſented as ariſing from nature. It is in this world a pearl of great price, thrown among them to ſcramble for; in the other, it is an ideal proſpect of immenſe and unſpeakable riches and glories, annexed to the ſuſpenſion of thought, enquiry, and improvement; to a pretended aſſent to the principles and propoſitions of others; to the practice of an artificial and mechanical morality, without the diſpoſitions neceſſary to that which is genuine, and without any motive but the hope of extravagant and inadequate rewards, and the fear of unjuſt and iniquitous cruelties. Here are the fruitful ſources of various enthuſiaſms and frenzies; and here there may be great occaſion for the reſtraints of moderation.

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There is a pleaſing calmneſs over all the regions of genuine knowledge and goodneſs, which gives them a kind of enchantment to well-diſpoſed minds. This is the reſult of an univerſal activity and vigour, within the bounds of reaſon, the miniſter of pleaſure. In all the dominions of ignorance and folly, there is a harſh and diſcordant noiſineſs and tumult, which is extremely diſguſting. This is ſeen moſt clearly in the influence of true and falſe religion. The firſt inſpires benevolence; is gentle; full of mercy, candour, and forbearance; and diffuſes peace and happineſs through the world: the other divides men; makes them hate, contend with, and torment each other.

I could not enumerate to you the various ſpecies of falſe religions, which have excited paſſions and frenzies moſt fatal to the happineſs of the world. The heathen idolatry is a common topic of declamation and abuſe on occaſions of this nature. It ſtands, with modern abſurdity and folly, in the ſame circumſtances with a woman who has been beautiful, but whoſe charms are faded, and who is ever the object of the moſt malignant ſatire, to another who is diſtinguiſhed with a native and original uglineſs. The ſuperſtitions of the ancients, like their beautiful edifices, are defaced only by time and violence. The communities of antiquity, in their decline, ſeem to have been like ſome great minds in the decline of life; who are ſaid to retain their former concluſions, while they have totally forgotten the premiſes and calculations which had led to them. The heathen mythology is natural philoſophy allegoriſed and abuſed by poets and prieſts: it has ever been, and it will ever

be, the eſtabliſhed religion of the muſes, whatever forms of government they may be ſubject to. We ſee, accordingly, Jews and Mahometans and Chriſtians of all denominations become heathen idolators when they become poets; and leave their own mythologies for thoſe of the ancients. The reaſon is, that Jupiter and Juno and Minerva and Neptune, were perſonifications of real principles in nature; whereas the phantoms of modern ſuperſtition are repreſentations of no true objects in heaven or earth. The former were, in the ſtate of all ſimiles, metaphors, and poetical ornaments, liable to be miſunderſtood and abuſed; but they were alſo uſeful, and furniſhed the moſt elegant entertainment and pleaſure: the latter, being the produce only of perverted and gloomy imaginations, are never uſeful, never pleaſing; but merely the inſtruments of impoſture, to intimidate and injure mankind. Idolatry, therefore, was to be reſtrained, as all exceſſes of natural paſſions are to be reſtrained. For, by fixing the attention wholly on poetical perſons, men were led away from nature, the only ſource of truth; they eaſily wandered into follies and vices; and their whole ſyſtem fell a ſacrifice to more extravagant and myſterious inſtitutions. The emperor Julian ſeems to have had theſe ideas; and he lived at the very period of this remarkable revolution. He probably thought, that men were not at ſo great a diſtance from the real principles of nature and truth, and would not require ſo much trouble to lead them back to thoſe principles, while they adhered to the Heathen idolatry, as when the ambitious Chriſtian prieſts had plunged them into the fathomleſs abyſs of myſteries; awed them with heavenly and infernal phantoms; bound them

down to unintelligible and uſeleſs dogmas; and reduced them to the worſt ſpecies of ſlavery.——Succeeding events proved that he judged rightly.——Men, by reſigning their faculties to pretended heavenly commiſſioners, and becoming the tools of their ambition, exhibited a ſcene of ignorance, barbariſm, cruelty, and villainy, beyond any thing which had ever diſhonoured the annals of the world. This wretched ſtate remained, until ſome fragments of ancient learning were recovered; and ſome perſons were tempted, by manly thoughts and fine writing, into reaſon, into hereſies, and rebellions. Ignorance was then the empreſs of the world; ſhe was arrayed as a heavenly meſſenger; and her attendant fiends, Intolerance and Perſecution; her numerous claſſes of prieſts and executioners, loaded with inſtruments of torture, and thirſting for the blood, as well as aiming at the poſſeſſions, of mankind—this crew, more miſchievous, and more infernal, than any which had ever curſed the earth, were called the children, the elect, the favourites, the repreſentatives of God; and they committed their horrid depredations and enormities, all in the name of heaven. Men were rouſed by their miſeries which they ſaw wantonly inflicted; they were animated and encouraged by the noble ſentiments inſpired by ancient authors, to face this tyrant, which had chained to the earth their minds as well as their bodies. The revolutions which have been occaſioned by this reſiſtance; and the benefits which have flowed in upon us, as we have approached to nature, could not be enumerated on ſuch an occaſion as the preſent. They are in general known to moſt of you. What we are to take notice of is, that the methods taken, not by Chriſt and his firſt Apoſtles, but by the ambitious prieſts who eſtabliſhed the Chri-

ſtian Religion in the Greek Empire, to diſcourage the uſe of the human faculties, and ſubſtitute ignorance and faith, inſtead of knowledge and reaſon, have generated an unnatural and cruel paſſion, which our various reformations and revolutions have not deſtroyed—I mean that audacious, that tyrannic diſpleaſure and anger we inſtantly conceive at a man who thinks differently from us. Habits are formed and continued in nations by the ſame cauſes as in individuals. Moſt of us retain ſomething of this hateful principle; which was originally owing to an idea, that all our opinions had come from heaven, and that it was a crime to oppoſe or reject them. Many have loſt that perſuaſion; nay, we know that we acquire propoſitions and truths by natural means, and means which may often deceive us; and yet we retain the habit of diſliking and being angry with thoſe who either have not enquired as we have, or apprehend things differently from us. This paſſion for ſentiments, opinions, and forms of worſhip, which leads to think ill of, or to be diſpleaſed with, thoſe who differ from us, ſhould be ſubject to the ſtricteſt laws of moderation; nay, it ſhould be totally extirpated.

In religious opinions, and in religious differences, moderation is peculiarly neceſſary to correct thoſe acrimonious paſſions which have ſo long diſhonoured the world, and to induce us to form and to offer our opinions with that modeſty, that meekneſs of wiſdom, which are ſo becoming perſons in our ſituations.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

LUXURY. PART I.

I laid up gold as duſt; the gold of Ophir as the ſtones of the brooks.

I waſhed my ſteps with butter; and the rock poured me out rivers of oil.

My root was ſpread out by the waters; and the dew lay all night upon my branch.

AFTER having ſtated the duty of temperance and moderation, it may be proper to conſider the complicated, difficult, but very important, ſubject of luxury.

It is a certain proof that we have made but inconſiderable advances in the great ſcience of morality, when the very names of many virtues and vices are not yet ſettled. If luxury be a deſire of pleaſure, at the utmoſt expence which can juſtly be given for it, we are to conſider it, not only as a virtue, but as the higheſt we can poſſeſs. It is only, like other virtues, to be kept within its natural and proper bounds. But it has been defined—

expence

expence for the purpoſes of vanity; with the view of equalling or of ſurpaſſing others: expence, diverted from the channels of moral duties, to the purpoſes of ſelfiſh and vicious gratification, or what is commonly called pleaſure: nay, it has been defined all expence which exceeds our abilities. Theſe are vices. Thus we ſee virtue and vice are, in our language, called by the ſame name. Nor are the ideas of the people, in this matter, at all more diſtinct and better formed than their language. When this ſubject is brought before us, either in converſation or in books, a confuſion, worſe than that which is ſaid to have ariſen at Babel, enſues; we are diſtracted with crude ideas, half-formed apprehenſions, opinions directly oppoſite, vice put for virtue, virtue put for vice; and all expreſſed in intricate, ill-conſtructed phraſeologies, which are very little above jargon. We are therefore to enter on it with caution, attention, and to uſe our utmoſt ſagacity and judgment: for the errors are very important into which we muſt run, if we have not clear and diſtinct ideas of luxury, either as a virtue or as a vice. If we conſider the uſe of wealth, in procuring any kind of pleaſure, as the definition of luxury, and that luxury to be a virtue, we leave no room for principles of moral obligation, and we deſtroy every bond which unites us as members of ſociety. If, on the other hand, we paſs into the common extreme of ignorant enthuſiaſm, and blame all uſe of riches as a ſin, we cut the very ſinews of induſtry; we introduce a gloomy and ſavage indolence; we not only leſſen the number of human enjoyments; but, by reducing men to poverty and wretchedneſs, we prepare them for more ſhocking vices than any which can

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be committed by extravagance and exceſs. The firſt is the doctrine of profligacy; the ſecond is the doctrine of ignorance and wretched ſuperſtition: but neither is the doctrine of nature and truth.

Luxury is varied and multiplied pleaſure, procured by wealth. The original law of the Almighty: that which he gave in his goodneſs to mankind, and not, as it is imagined, in his diſpleaſure at their failings, is, that man ſhould ſupply his wants by his labour. The means of this ſupply cannot be procured without labour; ſome degree of which is alſo neceſſary to health; to the uninterrupted and pleaſant uſe of his powers. This labour has intervals, which are to be filled up by the purſuits of knowledge; by the cultivation of thoſe arts which leſſen labour, which exerciſe the fancy, and improve the heart; and in thoſe ſocial amuſements and virtuous gratifications, which vary and multiply the pleaſures of life. For Almighty God has ordained, that labour, which is neceſſary only to procure ſubſiſtence, ſhould not be equally neceſſary in all men; that the produce of the pains taken by a few, ſhould be equal to the ſupport of numbers; thereby opening a ſpace for moral principles and pleaſures. He appointed labour, in any conſiderable degree, to be painful; and the idea of being confined to it humiliating: for the intervals of labour are the precious moments of life; they are the moments of knowledge, virtue, pleaſure; and thoſe only, by the laws of nature, can be confined wholly to labour, who are incapable of improving theſe intervals. We ſee, therefore, that it has ever been the firſt object of men to ſhorten and leſſen

and

and reduce to nothing the period of labour; and to lengthen and ſpread over the whole of life the periods of knowledge and enjoyment. This is in the order of nature; in the moral views of a beneficent God; and is the firſt equitable and uſeful origin of diſtinction in ſociety. For the labour of a few ſupplying the wants of many, and only a ſmall degree of it, or of amuſing exerciſe, which is an imitation of it, being neceſſary to health, a higher kind of induſtry is excited; and a tempting proſpect is opened of rendering life one uniform ſcene of enjoyment. Thus men are gradually raiſed, from beaſts of burden, into various claſſes of intellectual and moral beings; and thus the various orders and the multiplied pleaſures of ſociety are intended to be produced.

The man who could firſt diſtinguiſh himſelf by his knowledge or his virtue, would be the firſt to increaſe his intervals of enjoyment; and the firſt who, by his uſeful inventions and good offices, could offer an equivalent to others for the ſuperfluous produce of their labour. Here is the origin of wealth, which is a right, obtained by knowledge and virtue, to enjoy a greater or leſſer quantity of thoſe things which are immediately the rights of others becauſe they are immediately the produce of their labour. There are no bounds to be ſet to the quantity of wealth and the meaſure of enjoyments to be procured by ſuch a man; for they cannot poſſibly be an injury or obſtruction to others; they cannot but be private and public benefits, while they are the fair and genuine effects of knowledge and virtue. Here we ſee, in the order, diſpoſition, and intention of nature, wealth is

a bleſſing,

a bleſſing, and luxury a virtue; for they vary and increaſe the happineſs of man; and happineſs is the only end of his exiſtence.

In a ſociety conſtituted on juſt and natural principles; where the diſtinctions are created by intellectual and moral excellencies; and where its commerce with other ſocieties is juſt and equitable; no quantity of wealth can be an injury; nay, the greater the quantity, the greater muſt be the ſum and quantity of its happineſs: for ſocieties are to other ſocieties as individuals are to each other. That ſtate which exerts the higheſt and beſt faculties, and with the greateſt induſtry, in uſeful inventions and in good actions, will accumulate thoſe commodities from other ſtates, which will leſſen its labour, and be the inſtruments of a pleaſurable luxury. No limitations can be ſet to theſe purſuits, beſides thoſe which are ſet by virtue; and within thoſe they cannot be too ardent and indefatigable: for no advantages procured by virtuous knowledge, no wealth, no luxury which are the fruits of it, can have any other effect than ſecuring, perpetuating, and heightening thoſe pleaſures, for which alone our lives are worth having. Let us imagine all the poſſible conſequences of wealth and luxury on a well-formed mind, or a well-conſtituted ſtate. Their firſt effects are, in leſſening the inconveniencies and evils which ariſe from poverty and labour; and in employing, uſefully and pleaſantly, thoſe intervals, which hang heavily and wretchedly on men who know not how to uſe them. Hence the contrivances which alleviate our fatigues, and in many caſes render all labour unneceſſary. Theſe might, in a virtuous, well-formed ſociety, be extended almoſt to all caſes; and exceedingly

dingly reduce the number of labourers: and it is the firſt object of ſociety, to leſſen the number of thoſe who undergo fatigues; and to multiply the number of thoſe who are at eaſe, and who enjoy themſelves. Thus the real proſperity and happineſs of a ſtate, formed and conducted on the principles of virtue, are not to be eſtimated, as they commonly are, by the number of its poor and wretched labourers, but by the number of thoſe inventions which render labour unneceſſary, and leave almoſt all the people their whole time for knowledge, virtue, and enjoyment.

You are to obſerve, I am proceeding on deductions of reaſon, and not on hiſtorical facts: and I chuſe to do ſo, becauſe we ſhall ſoon ſee, that, though hiſtorical facts may ſeem, to ordinary underſtandings, more palpable matters, and better foundations for principles of conduct, than deductions of reaſon; to men who can trace effects into their cauſes, there are no metaphyſical reaſonings ſo complicated in their principles, ſo uncertain and deluſive in the uſe to be made of them, as thoſe things which are commonly boaſted of as facts. The reaſon is, that they are equivocal productions of good and evil principles; and no man can diſtinguiſh the parents in the offspring. The man, therefore, in almoſt all caſes, who reaſons from facts, is ſure to multiply errors. This is generally the caſe with politicians; who are eternally reaſoning, and never come at truth, unleſs it be by chance. They take facts, inſtead of the truths of nature, for principles; they run into innumerable contradictions; and their diſquiſitions, laws, and forms of government,

are ever at enmity with truth, knowledge, virtue; and the greateſt impediments to the happineſs of the world. But I mention theſe things only to obviate an objection which is very likely to ariſe in your minds, when I am deſcribing a ſtate of things as it ought to be, and not as it is. It might occur to you, that ideal deſcriptions are only matters of amuſement, and not deſerving the attention which you would give to practical precepts. In this caſe, what appears to be ideal and deſcriptive, is moſt truly real and practical. The truths of morality and policy, as they are derived from nature, run through all the world, like great, unvarying lines: on all ſides of them, and in infinite directions, are all the curves and deviations of ignorance, error, falſe policy, and vice. Here we may find diviſions and ſubdiviſions of ſyſtems, under various denominations of religion, morality, and policy; what is apprehended to be virtue in one place, held to be vice in another; and facts and principles and ſuppoſed truths, to ſupport all ſorts of deſigns, and all kinds of practices: and yet all theſe hang, or are interſected, by the great lines of truth, which direct the general apprehenſions of the whole world. This is the reaſon that errors and vices do not injure on the whole; and that a piloſopher may ſay, "what is, is beſt." The nearer he is placed to nature, in his political and religious ſituation, the leſs difficulty he has to diſcover and apprehend truth; or, to reſume our alluſion, the nearer he is placed to thoſe great lines of truth and virtue, which are the very paths of the Deity, the leſs improbable, ideal, and viſionary, will they appear to him. We are placed at a great diſtance from theſe certain and direct roads of happineſs; and

we ſee them through clouds and darkly. Circumſtances, events, and facts, found among us, and ſeeming to prove that we are in a right direction, when our wretchedneſs tells us we are wrong, are often deluſive and fatal to us. It is in proportion as we have abilities for inveſtigation and reaſoning, and can trace thoſe great ways of Providence which appear to ignorance and cunning to be unreal and viſionary, that we can be ſaid to diſcover truth. When, therefore, I attempt to direct your views from falſe philoſophy, falſe policy, and falſe religion, to the truths of nature, I mean to lead you to things which ought, by way of eminence, to be called real; and the only important principles and facts. They may firſt appear diſtant, indiſtinct, and improbable, compared with thoſe palpable things which are about you: but as your intellectual apprehenſions improve; when your minds can perceive enlarged and univerſal truths, and not little, local, pitiful opinions and prejudices—you will have different apprehenſions from thoſe which ſome of you may now have of reaſoning and facts, realities and unrealities.

When, as on the preſent occaſion, we are conſidering a ſociety formed on the principles of virtue, and conſiſting of virtuous men, we muſt be ſenſible that we are talking of what would appear viſionary and ridiculous to a narrow-minded, cunning politician. We cannot point out to him ſuch a ſociety; and therefore—for he will pretend to reaſon—he will ſay we talk of a non-entity. We talk of things which are as real, as demonſtrable, as univerſal as light. We can prove, to every man who is not an ideot, that light is a pure, beneficent principle, actuating the univerſe; but we cannot remove the clouds which

which occaſionally mix with and obſtruct it. We cannot make it pervade gloomy foreſts and dreary caverns, or bring aſſociations of tygers, and communities of wolves, either to view or apprehend it as a bleſſing. It would be abſurd, therefore, to reaſon on facts, in communities which are either wholly, or in a great meaſure, deviations from nature. Plato's Republic, Sir Thomas More's Utopia, Lord Bolingbroke's Idea of a Patriot King, and Hume's of a perfect Commonwealth, have more real principles, real truths, and real facts, than all the ſyſtems of government, the codes of laws, and commentaries on laws, in the whole world.—Why?—Becauſe theſe uncommon men had abilities to deduce truths from nature, however diſtant they were placed from her, in their own ſituations; they uſed facts like rubbiſh, in heaps of which they might now and then find ſomething analogous to truth; and they looked on civil and religious inſtitutions, and on the principles, cuſtoms, morals, and policy, to which they had given riſe, as enormous piles of building, erected by ſavages, to depoſit plunder, to ſhelter villainy, and which could afford no rule of architecture worth attending to, by men who had nature, virtue, and the convenience and happineſs of men for their objects.

It was neceſſary that I ſhould make theſe obſervations, though they create a kind of digreſſion from the main ſubject, in order to give their proper weight and effect to thoſe deductions of reaſon, on which I am obliged to place my principal dependance. For though there may be abundant facts to prove the advantages of luxury; they may be oppoſed by as many facts,

facts, which ſeem to prove its ill effects. The time requiſite to ſtate theſe facts, and to conſider their nature and origin, would be too long for the patience of moſt men. We ſhould open a ſcene of wrangling, like a modern diſputation; where men can muſter a ſufficient number of arguments on each ſide, to tire and irritate each other. Our object here is truth; and our great ſource of it is nature. We regard or diſregard the inſtitutions of mankind, and the principles, cuſtoms, and facts ariſing from them, as they coincide with, or deviate from, the direct views of nature. Perſons, ſituated as we are, in communities originally formed by banditti; and which, though altered and improved by philoſophy and reaſon, ſtill ſtrongly ſavour of their primitive barbariſm, are often obliged, when we would deſcribe virtue and happineſs, to have recourſe to ideal circumſtances; or when we would propoſe a plan to render men good, proſperous, and bleſſed, to imagine a ſtate and ſociety for them. Surely it is more probable that our imaginations, or our deductions of reaſon, ſhould be true, natural, and practicable, than thoſe of a Hengiſt and Horſa, or Canute and Hardicanute, Pope Gregory and St. Auguſtine; or any ſuch philoſophers, law-givers, and apoſtles, as we now daily make away with at our places of public execution.

You muſt only conſider this lecture as introductory, on the ſubject of luxury; which cannot be properly diſcuſſed in the time uſually allotted on ſuch occaſions as the preſent.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXIX.

LUXURY. PART II.

THOSE who attended here laſt Sunday may remember, that luxury was defined to be varied and multiplied pleaſure, procured by wealth: that, beſides the care which was taken to ſeparate this clear and natural idea of luxury, from ſeveral other accounts, which have been offered to the world, and which have confounded men's apprehenſions on the ſubject; ſome obſervations were made on the proper mode of reaſoning to be uſed on this, as well as on many other occaſions.

The immediate and full effects of the beſt principles and maxims, which have been offered the world, have not taken place; becauſe, being the mere deductions of reaſon, they were thought to be impracticable. This has been alledged by kings, or by perſons in their name, for they are ſeldom capable of alledging things themſelves—by the numerous bodies of legiſlators, who have, in general, no idea of law, as a beneficent principle in ſociety, to prevent evil, and to produce happineſs, but conſider it as a temporary expedient to anſwer a ſudden exigence—

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of contracted, cunning lawyers, who ſeem to view truth with averſion and pain, as ſome anomalous creatures do the light; who conſider nature as one ſcene of darkneſs and confuſion; and who burden their enormous memories with pretended principles, from the innumerable accidents which ariſe in it—of haughty and bigoted prieſts, whoſe very exiſtence is a poſitive injury to truth; who trade in principles and opinions; and ſell what they pretend to be moral diſpoſitions and virtues; thereby rendering unneceſſary every exertion and employment of the mind, which can make men either wiſe or happy; and, under the maſk of beneficence, reducing them into a ſtate of irrecoverable ignorance, dependance, ſlavery, and wretchedneſs.

Theſe men rule the world; and the conſequence is ſuch as might be expected from their underſtandings and views. Let any reaſonable man look around the ſeveral communities where they preſide; let him conſider the views of thoſe communities, and their conduct towards each other; let him enquire of theſe great men, as they think themſelves, why the law of nations ſhould be totally deſtitute of real wiſdom and virtue?—They will ſmile, with Gothic conceit, at his ſimplicity and want of knowledge of the world. Theſe things with them are quite out of the queſtion, as principles to be adopted by judgment and choice; and the affectation of them is carried only ſo far as to prevent a ſtate of unremitting warfare and bloodſhed. Let him penetrate their ſeveral inſtitutions, and view their various religions, laws, cuſtoms, and manners; he might here be collecting facts, as they are called, for his whole life:—but of what uſe?—They

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are not truths arifing from the judgment and feelings of men in natural and happy fituations; but they are facts, it is true; they are conſequences, ariſing from the numerous contrivances of tyranny and prieſtcraft, to counteract nature; to check her voluntary diſpoſitions to an intelligent and virtuous induſtry; and to perpetuate the ſlavery and miſery of the world.

This is the reaſon that modern philoſophers have had ſo many diſputes on the principles of truth and virtue; and that moſt of them have been obliged to give up the attempt of founding either on any permanent and univerſal ideas. To the infamy of thoſe conſtitutions, which have led men ſo far from nature; and to the diſgrace of the preſent puny philoſophy, it is now the faſhion to think that wiſdom and folly, truth and falſehood, virtue and vice, are relative terms; and that they may, with great propriety, ſtand for each other in different ſituations: that what is good in one nation may be adopted as evil in another; and what is evil in one adopted as good in another; and that not in matters of caprice and fancy only, but in all doctrines of religion and morality. This is not a view of the preſent ſtate of things, coloured by an irregular imagination. It is not, by any means, the whole truth; nay, I am inclined to think that the worſt and moſt unpleaſing objects are not ſelected. But I hope they are ſufficient to convince you, that, in our ſituation, the way, eſpecially for men of common underſtandings and common knowledge, to come at truth is, not by collecting facts from the religion, policy, and manners of the world around us; but by a religious contemplation of nature; by an induſtrious

and ſteady inveſtigation of thoſe wiſe and beneficent principles which actuate it; and by the calm deductions of reaſon from thoſe principles, into all the general obligations of man. Theſe are the only clear and indiſputable ſources of truth and virtue. All the quantity which the world poſſeſſeth has been derived in this way. A community is wiſe and good in proportion to the number of its members who are capable of this intelligent induſtry; and who can actually poſſeſs themſelves of theſe realities, as they ſhould be called; but viſions and ideas, as they are called by the world. And a community is ignorant, diſpoſed and liable to evil, both civil and moral, in proportion to the number of its members whoſe intellectual and moral lives are ſupported by facts and doctrines and principles, either ſcientific or religious, which are the produce of the labour of other people. Every thing which I inveſtigate myſelf is real and beneficial; every thing which I take on the credit of others may likewiſe be real; but it can hardly ever be beneficial: it diverts my induſtry from its proper purſuits; it ſuſpends, and perhaps deſtroys, it; it ſubſtitutes the law of teſtimony inſtead of the law of nature; and introduces ſhadows for realities in all the important concerns of man.

If intellectual, moral, and religious truths may be eminently termed realities: if theſe can be actually obtained and formed into virtues, only by inveſtigation, and by various exerciſes of the underſtanding: if hiſtorical facts, ſcientific principles, and religious doctrines, are at the utmoſt only amuſing and doubtful probabilities, when we are only told or when we are only taught them: if Almighty God has evidently left us to this rational induſtry,

induſtry, in every thing relating to knowledge and happineſs; and all attempts to affix his name and authority to ſeveral expedients, which might render it unneceſſary, have weakened and debaſed the human mind: if the diſpoſitions and characters of men; if the conſtitutions and forms of civil ſocieties; and the principles, laws, cuſtoms, and manners ariſing from them, ſhould not be the effects of rational inveſtigation and unremitting induſtry; but of weak credulity, indolent habitude, and viſionary ſuperſtition:—if theſe things be ſo, I need no farther excuſe for leaving hiſtorical, moral, and religious facts, as uncertain and deluſive appearances; and having recourſe to nature; to rational and clear inveſtigations of reaſon, from its great principles and laws; as the only certain ſources of truth and ſatisfaction.

I may ſeem, to thoſe who conſtantly hear me, to inſiſt on theſe things unneceſſarily, and to tranſgreſs the laws of compoſition, by too frequently digreſſing from my ſubject into this channel. But though I am ſatisfied that many of them underſtand and go with me in my general deſign, I cannot help wiſhing alſo to be guarded againſt the miſtakes and ignorance of thoſe who occaſionally come here.

To ſee and underſtand the effects of luxury, which is more the virtue and bleſſing of communities than of individuals, we muſt have recourſe to reaſoning rather than facts; and to ideal and imaginary communities, rather than thoſe which are actually exiſting: becauſe we can more eaſily ſee and apprehend the truths of nature, when they are ſelected, arranged, and

ſet before us by reaſon, than when they are mingled and obſcured in actual life. It is a great effort of the underſtanding to inveſtigate and ſelect abſtracted truths; it is a much greater to enter into communities where ignorance and vice ſpread an univerſal darkneſs; to trace Nature as far as ſhe goes; and even to diſtinguiſh her in her perverſions; to aſcertain her influence in complicated caſes; and to deduce truths in her favour, in all her productions, when ſhe may be aſſociated with tyranny, prieſtcraft, chicanery, ignorance, ſuperſtition, and ſlavery. If men were capable of procuring truths by ſuch inveſtigations, then facts would be really facts, and the beſt materials and principles of reaſoning, knowledge, and virtue. But who does not ſee the infinite difficulty of ſuch inveſtigations to moſt people; and the extreme uncertainty and deluſiveneſs of thoſe things which are called facts?

In the caſe before us, that of luxury, we may, by way of experiment, try the two methods of inveſtigation.

The firſt is, to take a view of nature; and to regard thoſe principles of truth and beneficence by which our own diſpoſitions are formed. With great ſimplicity and certainty of reaſoning, we can ſay, that men, neceſſarily united in ſociety, ſupply their wants with eaſe; that, being actuated, as they ought to be, by juſtice, honour, and goodneſs, the diſtinctions which ariſe among them, are thoſe occaſioned by one man having more wiſdom and doing more good than another. In conſequence of this he procures wealth; which may increaſe without limitation,

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while it keeps pace only with his increaſe of wiſdom and goodneſs. This wealth multiplies his pleaſures according to its quantity: at the ſame time that it is the reward, it furniſhes the beſt and moſt pleaſing employment of his wiſdom and virtue. It cannot interfere with the happineſs of others; for he cannot be unjuſt or injurious. And the ſenſes, the imagination, the heart, and the underſtanding, which receive pleaſures from ſimple feelings and apprehenſions, are multiplied into a thouſand capacities by wealth, and are made to enjoy the common happineſs of humanity a thouſand fold.

We may ſuppoſe a ſociety as we ſuppoſe an individual, formed, actuated, and conducted by real wiſdom and virtue. This offers greater violence to probability, according to the common apprehenſions of it; becauſe ſocieties are almoſt totally deſtitute of any thing like a moral character. We may, however, imagine a ſtate, wiſe and virtuous in its principles of policy and government; and conſequently juſt, equitable, and beneficent in its commerce with other nations. For whatever ſuperficial politicians may ſay to juſtify their follies and villainies; however they may wiſh to ſeparate the ſciences of morals and politics; they are united by God; and he hath enjoined, with more ſolemnity and effect, than it is ſuppoſed he has on another occaſion, that no man ſhould rend them aſunder. Morals are the duties of individuals, and politics are the morals of ſocieties. One ſcience grows out of the other: and we always ſee, as a plant or a tree partakes of the nature of the ſoil, and is beautiful and uſeful, or otherwiſe, according to the ſuſtenance it derives from

from it; ſo the laws, conſtitution, policy and conduct of ſtates are good or evil, honourable or infamous, according to the nature of thoſe moral and religious principles out of which they grow.

Though virtuous ſocieties are not to be found; though it be difficult to point out one ſociety which is not infamous in its principles and tranſactions; yet, purſuing the ſame clear and certain deductions of reaſon from thoſe laws of goodneſs which actuate the univerſe, we may ſuppoſe a ſociety as we may ſuppoſe an individual, rendered proſperous and happy by wiſdom and goodneſs. In that caſe, every advantage which it may obtain in its commerce with other nations, by increaſing its luxury, muſt increaſe its real happineſs. Being incapable of fraud, or of oppreſſion; and its wealth being the natural and juſt conſequence of its ſuperior talents and virtues; no degree of it could poſſibly be injurious either to itſelf or to others: for it is the privilege of virtue to make thoſe advantages it derives from others a greater bleſſing even to them than if they had not been beſtowed on her. This we often ſee in private life, where the talents and goodneſs of one man are rewarded by diſtinction and wealth from many; and thoſe at whoſe expence he is elevated are rendered happier than they could have been by reſerving to themſelves what is his juſt reward. Thus it would be in ſocieties, if governments and kingdoms were wiſe and moral. A general emulation would ariſe in great inventions, in uſeful and elegant arts, and in public virtues. The wealth of one nation, though drawn from its neighbours, would never

never be to their injury; and, being obtained by induſtry and virtue, and ſpent with wiſdom, every poſſible degree of it would procure pleaſure, and be conſiſtent with the eternal ſafety and proſperity of the ſtate.

This is the ſhorteſt and cleareſt method of exhibiting the truth before us. It is deduced from indiſputable principles; and a rational mind is left without a doubt. Let us try the other method of reaſoning from facts; which would be equally certain, and perhaps more ſatisfactory, if men in general were qualified to purſue it. Before we take any ſtep in this proceſs, it is neceſſary we ſhould fix on a number of inſtances in private or public life, on which we have known the experiment has been made by wealth and luxury, and from which we may infer their tendency to be either good or evil. It is not ſufficient to ſay, that ſuch a man was harmleſs or inſignificant, or what is called a good ſort of man, when in low and indigent circumſtances, and that he became covetous and oppreſſive in affluence. To aſcertain the fact on which you would reaſon to the diſadvantage of wealth or luxury, it is neceſſary you ſhould know the temperament and conſtitution of that man, the inſenſible and inviſible effects which education and circumſtances have had on the formation of his underſtanding and heart. It is for want of this knowledge, which, indeed, is extremely difficult to be obtained, that we are apt to be deceived by facts and appearances, and run into the vulgar error—that men are corrupted by riches. We may as well ſay, that men are corrupted by the uſe of their limbs. Tie down a miſchievous man ſafely, and leave him

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no power to move, and he will do no harm; but reſtore him the uſe of his limbs, and he will employ them to the detriment of others, and perhaps of himſelf. Poverty and neceſſity bind down the human powers, and render them inactive and harmleſs. Wealth never does more than ſet the limbs of a man's mind at liberty, and ſhew what manner of creature he is; and is never an injury, either to its poſſeſſor or to others, but when it is employed by folly or vice. To ſay, that in moſt caſes it produces evil, is only ſaying, that moſt of thoſe who poſſeſs it are fools or villains. It is no rational objection to wealth and luxury: for the ſame objection may be made to meat and drink and raiment; to ſtrength, knowledge, underſtanding, and every thing which is liable to be abuſed. The difficulty, and even impoſſibility, of aſcertaining the various diſpoſitions and characters of thoſe who poſſeſs wealth, renders it almoſt impoſſible to reaſon on the ſubject from private facts.

We are in the ſame caſe, when we conſider communities. The reaſons which firſt bring a ſociety together are like the circumſtances which firſt concur in forming a child; they give it a conſtruction and diſpoſition which no future circumſtances can totally remove. We ſee all the Gothic governments, like harſh and coarſe bodies, have never been ſoftened and ſweetened into humanity, even by the Greek and Roman learning, and by all the late improvements which have been made in the ſciences and arts. Modern nations, with all their boaſted advantages, wear an air of ſavage and vicious ferocity, which plainly beſpeaks their origin. Even the Roman virtue, ſo much ſu-

perior to any thing which has been ſince exhibited, could never riſe into moral virtue, or what may be juſtly and rationally called public virtue. Rome was firſt peopled by robbers; and there was a ferocity and injuſtice in the Roman policy, which no improvement and knowledge could entirely remove. Wealth is obtained by honourable or diſhonourable means; and luxury is beneficial or hurtful to a community, according as the moral character of that community is good or bad. To ſay, that wealth ruined the Roman Empire, is not ſaying that wealth is injurious. We know there were eſſential defects in the principles of the Roman Government; and that the wealth it obtained iniquitouſly, it would certainly employ to its own detriment as well as that of others. We may thus reaſon in the caſes of all modern nations, whoſe governments, ſyſtems of policy, and plans of commerce, ſtill ſavour of Gothic barbariſm, oppreſſion, and injuſtice. Every nation muſt be ruined by wealth and luxury, if that wealth and luxury be obtained by fraud, injuſtice, oppreſſion, or any kind of vice.

Theſe two methods of inveſtigation, when they can be purſued as in the preſent caſe, lead to the ſame truth—that wealth in the hands of private or public virtue is a bleſſing; and that it is never injurious or hurtful, but when it is either obtained or employed by private or public vices.

LECTURE XL.

PRUDENCE. PART I.

The wiſe man is he who adheres to virtue, and does nothing but by the direction of prudence; conſequently never acts any thing but what is praiſe-worthy and fit to be admired.

He muſt have a due care of his family, and foreſee what may happen, without avarice, or too eager purſuit of riches.

Prudence has ſomething in it ſuperior even to philoſophy. It is this eminent virtue that guides and ſteers all the other ſciences of the mind, for the greater felicity of our lives.

THIS important virtue has ſo many counterfeits, and ſome of them ſo nearly reſemble it, that it is difficult to define and ſpecify its nature. There is hardly any virtue, by the affectation of which men may ſo often impoſe, not only on others, but even on themſelves.—" Prudence is an attention to others, " by which we excite that degree of good opinion which we " deſerve, and procure that degree of aſſiſtance which we will " not abuſe."

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The firſt effects of our actions and thoughts are on the mind; or what we call our ſenſibility. This we have already conſidered, and attentively traced thoſe combinations of ſentiments and mental habits which form a conſcience. And we have endeavoured to guard againſt the imputation of frivolous refinement, by ſhewing that morality is the great ſcience of man; that it requires all his thoughts and all his induſtry; that the minuteſt and ſlendereſt ſprings in the human mind are often the moſt important; and that error and vice are not owing to want of precepts and menaces, or thoſe principles we call motives, to excite the wiſhes and apprehenſions of men; but to real ignorance of human nature; an ignorance of thoſe minute, thoſe ſubtile cauſes, which will produce their effect on the minds and actions of men, whatever may be done to prevent it; with very little effect from the opinions which may be afterwards taught them; and even from the hopes of immortal joys, or the fears of eternal tortures. So that it has been truly ſaid—the Ethiopian may as well attempt to change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots, as a man do good who has been accuſtomed to do evil. It ſeems, therefore, a ſavage refinement on cruelty, to bring men up in evil habits, with fixed and ſtrong propenſities to vice; ignorant of the manner in which their diſpoſitions have been formed, or in which others can be ſubſtituted for them; abſolutely impelled, by an ill-directed and irregular mechaniſm, to be immoral and miſerable; and, after all, to tantalize them with hopes which they can never realize, and which they cannot entertain with eaſe and ſatisfaction; or to add deſpair to wretchedneſs, by opening before them ſcenes of eternal torments, which, though

they do not and cannot deſerve, for they have their full portion here, they may be eaſily induced to imagine they cannot avoid.

Ideots and ſavages, who ſee nothing in nature but wonders and miracles, may be ſubjected, in this manner, to the worſt and moſt ſhocking kind of tyranny. In proportion as men advance in knowledge, which wholly conſiſts in tracing effects to their cauſes, they gradually ſhake off ſome links of this heavy and galling chain. There are ſtages of the ſciences, in which they ceaſe to be the ſports or the entire employments of overgrown and ſuperannuated children: and there may be a period approaching, when the great induſtry which has been exerted in the elementary branches of knowledge, in mathematics, and in natural philoſophy, will enable men to form principles, and improve the morals, politics, and happineſs of the world. If you put a machine into the hands of a ſavage, and lead him to expect certain uſes and aſſiſtances from it, he will not enquire concerning the principles on which it is formed; he will refer its contrivance to magic, or to a demon; he will take care of it for its uſe; he may conceive an affection for it, while aſſiſting him; but when diſordered and become uſeleſs, he will reproach and daſh it to pieces. Thus have ignorant and barbarous men ever treated each other. They have conceived of the human mind as a ſavage does of the ſpirit of a machine; and they have talked to it and cajoled and threatened it, with the ſame inefficacy and abſurdity. If, therefore, an inſtrument, which is the produce of human contrivance, ſhould be underſtood, ſhould have its principles and movements known, to be regulated, al-

tered, or amended; much more ſhould that complex and exquiſite inſtrument, the human mind, the contrivance of the Deity, be underſtood, and its principles and movements known, to rectify its errors, or to ſecure all its happy effects.

This I mean as a juſtification of myſelf, in the method purſued in all theſe lectures, of inveſtigating truths with the utmoſt minuteneſs; and defining principles, by ſhewing how they are formed: in placing morality, as it ought to be, at the head of all the ſciences of man; for it is the great reſult, and the utmoſt effect, of all the knowledge, and all the philoſophy in the world. When this truth is actually and in general underſtood: when men purſue knowledge, not as empirics diſcover remedies, to aſtoniſh and impoſe; but to benefit themſelves and ſociety; the ſcience of morality will be underſtood; it will be taken out of the hands of ignorant, ſelfiſh, and ſuperſtitious prieſts; and be the buſineſs and glory of a real, enlightened, and liberal philoſophy:—and then, and not till then, men, and ſocieties of men, will become virtuous and happy.

If we mean to underſtand and to cultivate the moral virtues, we muſt be attentive to very exact and accurate definitions of them. "Prudence is an attention to others, by which we ex-"cite that degree of good opinion which we deſerve, and pro-"cure that degree of aſſiſtance which we will not abuſe." In the management of our private affairs, it is apt to be confounded with œconomy; and in the gratification of our paſſions, with temperance. This is not ſo material an error, as when it

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is miſtaken for vices which aſſume its appearance, and which are not naturally aſſociated with it. But as it is of the ſame importance, and in a much higher degree, that the principles of our minds ſhould be diſtinctly known and characteriſed, as that the ſeveral principles of a machine ſhould have their proper and ſeveral parts aſſigned them—we ſhould conſider prudence, as it is actually in the moral ſyſtem, a virtue deſigned to regulate and direct our ſocial affections and conduct: ſo that when we have arranged our affairs with œconomy, and adjuſted our affections by the directions of temperance; we owe an attention to others, which is called prudence; and which, rightly underſtood, is the moſt important and moſt uſeful virtue of ſocial life.

Here we proceed againſt the ſtrongeſt prejudices in the preſent regions of genius and morality. Wits and poets, and that immenſe tribe of men and women who are guided by ſentiment, affect to treat prudence as an old, withered, and frightful hag, fit only to keep dull and unfeeling fools in order.—Wits, poets, and the devotees of ſentiment, are not perſons we are to reaſon with: for they renounce reaſon; and have not vigour of mind ſufficient to attend to any of its deliberate, important inveſtigations. This is the cauſe that a perſon may be a wit, a poet, or be thoroughly ſentimental; and yet, to all the great and manly purpoſes of human life, be undetermined, unſteady, unprincipled; and, both to himſelf and every perſon connected with him, a very wretch. That men have had wit without prudence, cannot be doubted; that they have reaped pleaſures from random and illicit gratifications, cannot alſo be doubted:

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but that prudence is inconſiſtent with wit; with any of thoſe vigorous and tranſcendant exertions which diſtinguiſh the productions of poetry; or with the moſt exquiſite and varied pleaſures which can ariſe from our ſenſibility; are the concluſions only of ignorance, affectation, and impoſture. Perhaps the moral world has never ſuffered greater injuries, than from brilliant, but confined, talents, aſſociated with ignorance, or with villainy. Theſe have ariſen principally in the region of what has been called wit; which preſents a ſcene, like that of a tempeſtuous night, where darkneſs and miſery generally reign, and where gleams of lightning only now and then relieve the gloom. This has been ſo much the caſe, that wit, by its very poſſeſſors, is ſometimes deemed a curſe; and wits and poets are often ſpectacles of horror and miſery.

Theſe facts may be accounted for in modern times; becauſe the cultivation of pleaſing talents has been on wretched ground. The theatre was originally a part of the king's houſhold; and the performers were buffoons for his diverſion. Hardly any thing could have a worſe origin, if we conſider the characters of thoſe kings and courts whom theſe wretches were to amuſe. Wit and poetry were to furniſh jeſts for this purpoſe; and as wits and poets, with all their contempt of prudence, have ever ſacrificed more to her image, than the beſt men do to the real virtue, they prudently became the votaries and panegyriſts of thoſe vices which allotted them a precarious and wretched ſupport. This is the reaſon of the ſcandal under which theatres have ever lain; and the difficulty, ſometimes the cruel difficulty,

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which thoſe who belonged to them have ſtruggled under, to appear in the world on a footing with others of their talents and merit. There was ſome reaſon, however, for the reproach under which they lay; it was owing to an illegitimate quality, which bears the name of that prudence they have ever affected to deſpiſe. Talents, employed to make gloomy and ſanguinary tyrants laugh, merited the difficulties under which they have laboured to obtain any degree of credit. This occaſioned the moſt ridiculous oppoſition between wit and reaſon; and wit, trained up and employed to make vice laugh, loſt the faculty of contributing to the amuſement of virtue; nay, became at enmity with it; and finding ſenſe and decency obſtacles to its intereſt, it had ſufficient prudence, as it is called, to ſport with and ſacrifice them. Thus wit has been at variance with real prudence, from a mean and ſervile ſelfiſhneſs; and while it has flaſhed and bounced over the boundaries of reaſon and virtue; becauſe, forſooth, it muſt not be trammelled, and deteſts the rules of prudence; it ſervilely kept its eye fixed on the brow of a ſtupid tyrant; and patiently and prudently ſubmitted to the checks, corrections, and commands of his favourite or his chamberlain.—This is a common artifice of hypocriſy, to declaim loudly at what it eminently poſſeſſes. Thoſe pretended ſons of fire, who affect to move, like meteors, in all directions through infinite ſpace; who ſay they know no rules, from earth or heaven, but their own impulſes; and who laugh at the common principles which influence common mortals; have, in all my knowledge, poſſeſſed, eminently, remarkably, and the worſt kind of, thoſe qualities, which they pretended to deſpiſe. True genius, guided by prudence,

prudence, would give law to the world: and it is juſt as natural and honourable to joke and gambol to keep wolves and bears in good humour, after a day of carnage and cruelty, as for men of true genius, and real ſublimity of conception and thought, to devote them to a deſpot and his minions, who want to chaſe the reflections of bloody councils, and of deſigns and actions, which cannot be reviewed even by bad minds.

Reaſon and philoſophy have relieved the world of abundant quantities of that traſh which has gone under the name of wit; and they will proceed, until only what is genuine remains; that ſprightly, enchanting quality, which is one of the inſtruments of prudence and virtue, in heightening the felicity of life. Here a diſtinction obviouſly ariſes between true and falſe wit, as well as between true and falſe prudence. Falſe wit is the talent of producing ſtrong and groteſque ſimilitudes, which may tempt fools to laugh at virtue; may make murder grin; and tyranny unfold its brows. This, it muſt be confeſſed, is a talent: and this is the kind of wit which has moſtly diſtinguiſhed modern theatres. We are not to wonder, then, that this is not in alliance with reaſon, or prudence, or virtue; and that it has ſought all occaſions to diſhonour them. But we have obſerved, there is a prudence, a ſervile caution, which it has ever attended to, and by which it has obtained its infamous and wretched ſupport. True wit is the art of combining ideas apparently unlike; and forming ſimilitudes which give pleaſure to virtue, by ſingularity, novelty, and ſurpriſe. The ſenſations excited by falſe wit, in a bad man, are violent and convulſive, and attended by languor and pain; thoſe of real wit, in a good man, are

lively, exquiſite, and delightful, ſucceeded by tranquility and pleaſure. We ſee the reaſon that the former is at enmity with prudence, and that the latter is its chearful and happy inſtrument. Falſe wit knows nothing of reaſon and virtue, but from their reſtraints. Genuine wit feels none of thoſe reſtraints; for the directions of reaſon and goodneſs to real genius are, like the hand of God in the univerſe, unperceived and unfelt. Bad men only are fettered and ſhackled by prudence: in good men it points out and regulates, but never reſtrains or gives uneaſineſs. A ſtate of knowledge and virtue only is a ſtate of freedom; the dominion and tyranny of other principles, whether wit, humour, love, avarice or ambition, is abſolute and wretched ſlavery.

I thought it neceſſary, in a diſcourſe on prudence, to begin with its moſt forward and plauſible enemy, falſe wit—that talent for exciting laughter in weak and bad men, at the expence of their real intereſt and happineſs; that talent, which ſome perſons carry about them, like an offenſive weapon, to wound the reputation and peace of their acquaintance; which, when unaccompanied, as it always is unaccompanied, with real wiſdom and genuine benevolence, makes a man feared and hated for the miſchief he can do; and gives him only that ſuperiority and conſequence given to a venomous ſerpent, which men make way for to avoid, and which they obſerve and watch only to deſtroy.

The uſe of real wit, like that of all the ſecondary and inferior talents, ſhould be regulated by prudence. Genuine wiſdom; extenſive and ſolid knowledge; an enlightened benevolence, and benign

benign virtue: theſe great, theſe ſupreme attainments of humanity, are not liable to abuſe—but the minor faculties of wit and humour; the talents by which we ſport and play, are thoſe which require guidance and direction. And it is of very ſerious importance to the happineſs of life that they ſhould be uſed with prudence. Brilliant and lively men, who have the faculty of giving every thing a laughable appearance, though we do not think them of importance enough to take them into our councils and our friendſhips, they are the orcheſtra of our feſtive entertainments; and we eſteem them according to the effect of their performance, in making us laugh. The judgment we are to exerciſe is in the choice of the objects which we are to ſacrifice to our diverſion. Vice and folly we are allowed to make free with; but we are to be very ſure we miſtake them not. For as it is a maxim in criminal juſtice, that an hundred villains ſhould eſcape rather than one innocent man ſuffer; ſo ſhould it be in intellectual juſtice: it is even better that there ſhould be no wit in the world, than that one virtuous or good man ſhould be ſacrificed by it. The talent of giving pleaſure, of making a man agreeable, or of rendering others ridiculous, is a dangerous one; it often makes a man ridiculous, when marked out as in poſſeſſion of it; it is deteſtable, when uſed at the expence of decency, of friendſhip, of truth, or of any moral virtue; and though it be not a common topic of religious diſſertations, it is of ſo much importance to the happineſs of ſociety, that it ſhould be ſubject to the care and regulations of prudence.

I ſhall reſerve the further conſideration of this ſubject for another time.

LECTURE XLI.

PRUDENCE. PART II.

IN the laſt lecture, prudence was defined to be an attention to others, which may ſecure us that degree of good-opinion, eſteem, and aſſiſtance, which we deſerve, and of which we will make a proper uſe. It is neceſſary that we ſhould thoroughly underſtand this definition; and that we ſhould accurately diſtinguiſh that virtue which is genuine, and which is deſigned by nature to make us happy, from thoſe numerous prejudices and vices which aſſume its name, and which make us miſerable, while perhaps we aim at being religious, virtuous, or good.—This certain conſequence of error, under the conviction and conceit of ſuperior knowledge, might have decided the famous moral and political queſtion, on which the philoſophers and divines of the laſt century were ſo intent—Whether atheiſm or ſuperſtition were moſt pernicious?—It has been ever ſince the triumph of ſuperſtition, that judgment was given in its favour; and it has continued, with an authoritative alacrity, to lay waſte the world. But philoſophers are men, and ſubject to all their apprehenſions and fears. If at this time it would not be the

intereſt,

intereſt, and would not be ſafe for philoſophers to ſpeak truth, and to act like men; we may well ſuppoſe it was not ſo in the days of Hobbes and Bayle. If ſuperſtition, in every degree of it, be founded on error; and if it counteract the effects of knowledge and goodneſs, it is a poſitive and active evil. Whereas atheiſm, being the effect merely of ignorance, is rather a misfortune; and its effects are the harmleſs ones which uſually follow upon mere ignorance. Though I am convinced, with as much firmneſs and with as good reaſons as of my own exiſtence, that there is a wiſe and powerful and benevolent principle that actuates all nature; yet I ſubſcribe, with intire aſſent, to the ſentiments of that wiſe and able moraliſt, Plutarch, who ſaid—"It was much better men ſhould even diſbelieve and deny "the exiſtence of a God, than believe him to be ill-diſpoſed, and "of an immoral character."—All the quibbles which have been brought to obviate the conſequences of this propoſition; the appeals to prudence, expedience, and intereſt, may do very well in modern politics, and in the ſchemes of legiſlators and prieſts, whoſe only aim is to keep the people, like cattle, in thoſe tracks where they may be moſt ſerviceable to them; but will be deſpiſed and deteſted by every one who apprehends and judges and feels like a man.

To ſee the difference between ignorance and error, in all poſſible caſes, take a child totally unacquainted with truth; and take a good old lady, who is, as ſhe ſuppoſes, juſt going to heaven, loaded with points of faith and principles of religion; and you will have proofs, as many as you can wiſh, as clear

and

and as convincing as any mathematical concluſions, of the great and important difference between ignorance and error. Take a ſavage, uncorrupted by European commerce; take a ſimple ſavage, who, in the compaſs and variety of his knowledge, is but little above a brute: take a religious ſavage, millions of which you may have in Europe; and, in attempting to inſtruct both, you will have more convincing proofs of the very important difference between ignorance and error. The former you may eaſily benefit; the latter you ſeldom or never can. This, by the way, ought to be written on the hearts of thoſe who have the care and education of children. Children ſhould be inſtructed ſparingly, accurately, and in thoſe things only which they perfectly comprehend: for, if we attend carefully to ourſelves, we ſhall perceive that our ignorance is eaſily to be removed; but our errors never. It is infinitely better, therefore, that you ſhould leave your children ignorant, than, by directing their views to improper or incomprehenſible objects, you ſhould fill their minds with prejudices and miſtakes.

I take notice of this diſtinction between ignorance and error; becauſe it is owing to miſapprehenſion of the nature of prudence, that we ſee ſo little of the virtue; and even find it diſcredited and reproached. It is as impoſſible to be healthy without temperance; or to be generous without being juſt; as to be truly reſpected by wiſe and good men, and to profit by their good opinion and aſſiſtance, without prudence. This truth would clearly prove itſelf in a ſtate of ſociety produced by natural principles: for ſociety, in that caſe, would only be a larger and more

extenſive

extenſive definition of one's ſelf. And as private good-opinion is neceſſary to private happineſs; ſo mutual or reciprocal eſteem is neceſſary to the being and happineſs of ſociety. In ſuch a caſe, prudence and honeſty would never be at variance: for to be diſhoneſt would be imprudent; and to exhibit ourſelves with ſimplicity and truth, would be neceſſary to excite only that degree of good-opinion of us which we deſerve; and which alone can be of real and laſting ſervice to us. The talent by which men impoſe on others; by which aſtoniſhing and wonderful characters are ſupported;—this is art, policy, or cunning; and this muſt be exerciſed in ignorant and vicious ſocieties. There are no wonderful men in nature, or in ſocieties formed on the principles of nature. All prodigies, whether in human characters, or in human productions, are fabricated and ſupported by impoſture, at the expence of folly. This is ſo true, that one of the moſt renowned of all wonderful men ſaid, that "no man "was ever a hero in the eſtimation of his valet de chambre." A virtuous and happy ſociety would not admit of theſe prodigies; or of the art, policy, and cunning which produce them. Honeſty, therefore, is not only conſiſtent with prudence; but is eſſential to it: for it would be highly imprudent to lead others into miſtakes concerning us; or to induce them to conceive of us a better opinion than we deſerve.

This is the preciſe point at which the true and falſe virtue divide; and here, I know, it requires our utmoſt reſolution to determine on chuſing, with a very few, the real, ſimple, unadorned, but charming, truth, leading to humble, conſtant tran-

quility and ſocial happineſs; or, with multitudes, that viſionary and ſeducing falſehood, which opens before us a fairy-land, where every thing is unreal, but miſery. Let any man for a moment recollect himſelf; let himſelf propoſe, only for a given time, or a certain number of occaſions, to exhibit himſelf as truly as he appears to God; and he will comprehend my meaning; he will feel the importance of the ſituation I deſcribe; and he will, at the ſame time, perceive what choice he himſelf has made. It is at this point we muſt ſtop, or we know not where we ſhall. It is eſſential to prudence; it is eſſential to virtue, and the happineſs of life, that we ſhould reſolve, at all events, to appear no wiſer, no better, than we are; and to ſhew that we will not ſuffer ourſelves to be tempted by any occaſion, or any advantage, to give mankind a greater or better opinion of us than we really deſerve. This juſt opinion is the only thing which can give pleaſure to a genuine and manly mind; and the advantages reſulting from it are great and numerous. It would therefore be improper, injudicious, and immoral, to neglect any kind of attention which might ſecure this good opinion. It is neceſſary, not only that we ſhould ſpeak truth, but that others ſhould have reaſons to depend on our veracity; not only that we ſhould be conſcious of honeſt intentions, but that others ſhould have a reliance on them; and that our candour, compaſſion, and benevolence ſhould not be confined to wiſhes and ſentiments in our own breaſts, but ſhould be known to others, with the ſame truth and certainty as they are to ourſelves.

But as the condition of human ſocieties cannot well be perfectly rational; as ſome men will be ignorant; others prejudiced; and

and others vicious;—it is the particular province of prudence, to guard againſt the inconveniencies occaſioned by being aſſociated with perſons of theſe different characters. On fair and even ground it is not difficult to walk; and in virtuous ſocieties it would not be difficult to act. It is in imperfect and vicious communities that prudence has difficult duties. Here it might be often fatal to ourſelves, and injurious to the world, to appear wholly as we are, or to exhibit the whole truth of ourſelves; and here the utmoſt that honeſty requires is, that we ſhould not deſignedly appear to be what we are not. To aſſociate with, or to benefit, fooliſh and wicked men, it is neceſſary to have their good opinion: in order to this, it may be expedient to withhold from them thoſe truths, or virtues, which we know they will miſtake and pervert; as we would withhold ſtrong lights from the eyes of thoſe who have been long accuſtomed to darkneſs, and who would execrate it for the pain it would give them. This is prudence, aſſociated with humanity, and conſiſtent with the pureſt and ſtricteſt integrity: but deſignedly to appear what we are not, in order to deceive men into a good opinion of us; and, by that opinion, to lead them even into knowledge and virtue—is at beſt but virtuous roguery; beneficial perhaps to the perſons deceived; but injurious to the deceiver. This diſtinction, you will ſay, is nice: ſo are moſt of the diſtinctions which are important to the happineſs of ſociety; and the man who is not able to make them, inſtantly and accurately, is liable to take vice for virtue, and to find himſelf miſerable for ever, when he thinks himſelf in the road to happineſs.

In all the exertions of our abilities; which are of no uſe, unleſs they are uſeful to ſociety; a benevolent, but honeſt, attention to others is requiſite; and this alone can be called prudence. An oſtentation of abilities, which is either a pain or a reproach to others, is unmanly as it is imprudent. Too great ſeverity, in expoſing either the follies or weakneſſes of men, is ſure to excite hatred; and we can ſeldom or never be of ſervice to them, but by having their good-opinion and eſteem.—Even in the practice of virtue there is a modeſt caution and reſerve, which is as uſeful as it is amiable. It may be proper, on many occaſions, to withhold our virtues as well as our talents; and not to exaſperate prejudices, or drive even vice to deſpair, by an open, full, and minute diſcharge of our duty; eſpecially if our failings, and occaſional ill-conduct, ſhould lay us open to the attempts of calumny and malignity. It will then be particularly becoming us to avoid oſtentation, even in our real virtues; for Malice will be believed, when ſhe attributes them to falſe motives and falſe views.

But the greateſt and moſt diſcouraging difficulty of prudence, is in thoſe caſes, where nature militates againſt cuſtom; and where the inſtitutions of ſociety, and the doctrines of religion, are in direct oppoſition to natural inclinations, and to the practice of the moſt clear and indiſputable virtues. Here, as on a fatal rock, moſt men are abſolutely wrecked. By becoming prudent, as they call it, or by neglecting prudence, they become either hypocritical or abandoned. And yet, to live in ſociety, without attending to its cuſtoms, and without conforming in ſome meaſure

to

to its inſtitutions, is impoſſible. In the choice we make of our acquaintance and friends, and particularly in that choice which is to fix our ſtation in the community, we are to exerciſe judgment as well as inclination; and, while we gratify ourſelves, not to leave the happineſs of our friends out of the queſtion. In the choice of a common acquaintance, it is neceſſary, not only that we ſhould think him agreeable; but that our other acquaintance ſhould think him proper to be blended with them. But in friendſhips, in that union, which, in bleſſing me, bleſſes all who are dear to me; ſurely the greateſt attention is due to the opinions and inclinations of thoſe who are to receive us, when united, and to cheriſh us as their own ſouls. At the ſame time, therefore, that we lend a ſympathetic tear to the moans of diſappointed love; at the ſame time that we execrate the tyranny of prejudices and falſe opinions, and lament the barbarous ſacrifices they daily make among the faireſt works of God: yet a little ſober recollection and ſober humanity will turn our eyes to a ſcene as affecting, where ſilent, heart-broken parents are ſtealing from miſery towards the grave; where every rational and fond hope is blaſted; and where the only remiſſion of anguiſh is in forgetting they ever had a child. In this caſe, it may often be the prudeuce and duty of parents to give up their prejudices and views to the happineſs of a child: and it may alſo be the prudence and duty of a child to ſacrifice its inclinations to the happineſs of its parents.

In religion, as a diſtinct ſcience from virtue, and as that word is generally underſtood, prudence is extremely neceſſary. To

deal with hypocrites, bigots, and enthuſiaſts, requires the wiſdom of the ſerpent, united to the harmleſſneſs of the dove: eſpecially as belief is conſtrued into merit; and a man is no ſooner in poſſeſſion of an opinion, than he has the aſſurance to require his neighbours alſo to be in poſſeſſion of it. Though this be in itſelf a truly ridiculous ſituation; yet it becomes a ſerious one, when the bigot holds a knife at your throat, and you are aſſured he will murder you, if you do not believe as he does. The prudence of this caſe is to be ſilent: for a daſtard or a knave only will ſubmit to the indignity of ſaying he believes what he does not believe. Other inconveniencies and dangers, ſuch as the riſque of breaking in on the harmony of our families, the pleaſures of friendſhip, and the advantages of relationſhip and neighbourhood, may make us prudent, without making us diſhoneſt in our modes and forms of religion.

We ſee, therefore, that the common apprehenſions of prudence are erroneous.—It is not that art by which men uphold pretences to wonderful and prodigious talents, or of unnatural and miraculous virtue. This is a ſelfiſh, painful ſcience; and every man who aims at being a prodigy, ſets out with being a knave; leads a life of conſtant jealouſy and anxious apprehenſion; and reaps only wretchedneſs for his pains.—It is not the art of appearing better than we are, in order to obtain a better opinion than we deſerve. This is highly imprudent; as the advantages ariſing from it do not make amends for the conſtant, painful efforts we muſt make, to ſupport a character to which we are not equal.—It is not the art of making the moſt of others, by improving

improving their ignorance, folly, or vices, to our own advantage. This cannot be done consistent with honesty, humanity, and benevolence. We therefore lose more, in point of pleasure, by the loss of these virtues, than we can possibly gain by our prudence.

All the imitations of prudence are mean and selfish vices. Prudence is among the most amiable and most generous of all the virtues. Its modest desire of esteem; its fear of offending; its regard to the prejudices, failings, and even vices of men, are the effects of humanity and goodness; and the advantages accruing to itself, are ever in consequence, either of avoiding offence, or of giving satisfaction and happiness to another.

This virtue, therefore, has been ridiculed and discredited, because it has not been understood. No man would attempt to ridicule that desire of esteem, which is regulated by a certain consciousness of useful and virtuous talents. No man would disparage that most important and amiable principle, which leads men to check their first impulses, and multiplies the pleasure of indulging them, by softening and blending them with the inclinations of others. This attentive virtue, and this alone, makes brethren dwell together in unity. This gives us such soft and affecting pictures of union in domestic life; where all the parts actually move on one spring; and where every impulse of the heart is raised into enjoyment, by the aid of a general affection. It is this makes friendships so delightful and so advantageous: and perhaps the best definition of prudence is the common soliloquy

liloquy of a real friend.—" I have conceived a great and noble " idea; and I will haſten to communicate it to my friend. " When my own opinion is ſtrengthened by his, and we have " mutually rejoiced in the diſcovery, I will make it known to " the public. How will he be delighted at the opportunity I " have had of relieving diſtreſs, or of aſſiſting induſtry! but " how ſhall I mention to him, that, in ſuch an inſtance, I have " acted unworthy of myſelf, and of his attachment!"—It is this attentive, benevolent regard to others, which alone deſerves the name of prudence; and not any ſpecies of the ſelfiſh and vicious cunning, which goes under that denomination. Our happineſs is to be found only in ſociety; and we can never procure it by acting merely for ourſelves. All our thoughts and all our actions ſhould have ſome relation, either to our families or friends; to our neighbours and acquaintance; to the communities in which we live, or to the great community of mankind. It is the art of allotting to theſe ſeveral relations their juſt and reſpective attentions, which may be truly and properly termed prudence.

LECTURE

LECTURE XLII.

FORTITUDE. PART I.

Who can have any power over me? Whence could they have it?—He who is ſubdued by man, muſt long before have been ſubdued by things. He, therefore, of whom neither pleaſure, nor pain, nor fame, nor riches can get the better; and who is able, whenever he thinks fit, to throw away theſe things with contempt—whoſe ſlave can he ever be? To whom is he ſubject?—Shall I, then, who can receive greatneſs of ſoul and a manly ſpirit from myſelf, ſolicit an eſtate, or a ſum of money, or a place, from another?—I will not be ſo inſenſible of my own poſſeſſions.

IT would be difficult to point out any virtue ſo important to the happineſs of life as fortitude: and yet it is a virtue which few men attempt to acquire. Indeed, in this, as in many other caſes, we may perceive an eſſential difference between ancient and modern morality. The ancients ſeem to have thought, that nature never endowed us with virtues; but that they were to be acquired by education, diſcipline, and reaſon: that nature gave only firſt principles, which might be improved or perverted by

the management they received. We accordingly have many intimations, that their method of education was the beſt which can be imagined: for they formed the mind to virtue, as they formed the body for uſe, by leading it into action and exerciſe. We are not to wonder, then, that among the precious remains of ancient, particularly of Greek, Learning, we have no books of maxims, precepts, and morals, for children. The Greeks were much farther advanced in the knowledge of human nature than we are; and, without doubt, it appeared to them as abſurd to tell a child to be wiſe, magnanimous, patient, and good; as to tell him to be ſtrong, agile, and ſwift. They knew that both depended on the improvement made by diſcipline, and education of the principles and diſpoſitions originally given by nature. The uſe of the mental faculties was therefore taught in the ſame manner as the uſe of the bodily ones; and while their games and feſtivals were images of war, and prepared men to defend their families and their country; the ſchools of Epicurus, of Zeno, of Socrates, and of Plato, were extenſive groves, gardens, porticos, and cities; they were images of the world, where wiſdom was acquired by intellectual exerciſe, and morality taught by actions. This is the reaſon of that decided and manifeſt ſuperiority, which the intellectual and moral character of the Greeks has conſtantly upheld and exhibited over all the other nations of the world. For it has been the utmoſt ambition and glory of ſucceeding nations, to adopt from them the wiſdom and morality which they acquired from nature and diſcipline. This gave riſe to learning, the moſt formidable enemy to wiſdom and virtue. For inſtead of taking the ſame methods

thods which the Greeks did to acquire great and manly faculties, we exerciſe our memories only in retaining their maxims, principles, and ſyſtems. The effect of this on the mind is preciſely that which ſtudying books of dancing, fencing, or riding, would have on the body. By reading you might become very learned in the principles and rules of thoſe ſciences; but you would neither dance, nor fence, nor ride. It is the ſame with wiſdom and virtue; you may fill your heads with all the principles and maxims which have been laid down by the wiſdom and virtues of all antiquity; but you are not, by ſuch means, advanced one ſtep towards wiſdom and virtue yourſelves. If a Socrates could appear among our modern literati, with that aſtoniſhing uſe and command of his faculties, which an attentive diſcipline had given him, he would realize the fables of romance, and whole armies and whole provinces of men merely learned would fly before him.

It is not, therefore, by ſaying as others have ſaid; it is not by committing to memory the maxims of a God, that we can ever become wiſe or good. It is only by having recourſe to that attention, that diſcipline, and that practice, by which thoſe maxims were diſcovered.

This truth is ſtrikingly exhibited to us in nature; where a majeſtic and ſolemn ſilence ever prevails; where the Deity never ſpeaks but by action; never teaches principles of wiſdom, and doctrines of morals, but by his works; where he gives us only models and examples, and leaves us to form ourſelves on them by experience and reaſon.

But the preſent practice is to learn knowledge, inſtead of acquiring it; to commit doctrines and maxims to memory, inſtead of obtaining them by experience and diſcipline. Hence the reaſon that we are not ſo wiſe as ſome of the ancients, even with the advantage of their diſcoveries; and that we are not ſo virtuous, with the advantage of all their leſſons and ſentiments. Here we may ſolve the problem, that men advance in knowledge without profit; and that learning flouriſhes, while private and public morals are becoming daily more deteſtable and ſcandalous.

The virtue now under conſideration is in our religion a matter of precept; and all our books of leſſons and morals ſay fine things of fortitude. We conſider it as a pieee of good fortune; or the more ſuperſtitious of us may thank Providence, if we are happy enough to poſſeſs it. But we ſeem to have loſt all idea, that it is a virtue which we may and ought to acquire; that, though the natural diſpoſitions on which it depends may not be alike in all; yet hardly any man is ſo unfortunately conſtructed and diſpoſed, as not to be able to acquire a ſufficient ſhare to enſure the tranquility and happineſs of his life.

Fortitude in the mind is exactly what ſtrength is in the body. Every mind is naturally endowed with ſome ſhare of it, as all bodies have ſome degree of ſtrength; and moral infirmities, diſeaſes and and miſeries are brought on by the ſame kind of management which produces bodily infirmities, diſeaſes, and miſeries. We ſee, accordingly, that thoſe youths who are brought

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up by ignorant, but tender and affectionate, parents, have commonly both their minds and bodies incapable of bearing the common, unavoidable, and neceſſary events of life. The general concern of effeminate ignorance is, that children be never expoſed to any thing which may affect either their bodies or their minds; and the conſequence of ſuch care, if it could be obſerved, would be to render them totally unfit to live. Men of fortune, therefore, of whom this falſe care is generally taken, do not come into life with equal advantages, either of body or mind, even with thoſe wretches, who are the refuſe of ſociety, and who are left to be formed by chance, or by accidents. There is a debility of conſtitution, a weak impatience, and a childiſh inconſtancy, which marks our people of condition, and renders them uſeleſs, incapable of a great, manly, and uniform conduct, and tireſome to themſelves and others. Theſe people do not want inſtructions and maxims and doctrines; but it is diſcipline alone which produces fortitude; and when a man is trained to cowardice by education and habit, it would be in vain that a God would enjoin him to be brave.

As the free and frequent uſe of our limbs, ſubject to all the variations of the weather, and to all the changes of our ſeaſons and climate, are abſolutely neceſſary to a firm, ſtrong, and healthy body, capable of undergoing its duties with eaſe and pleaſure: ſo the free and frequent uſe of our faculties, under all the difficulties ariſing from our ſituations; from the prejudices of our families; the vices of our neighbours; and the ſtate of our morals and politics; are abſolutely neceſſary to that health, ſtrength,

and conſtancy of mind, which will make us go through the duties of life with eaſe and pleaſure to ourſelves.

This matter is remarkably illuſtrated in the acknowledged effects of the two methods obſerved in modern education. Men in general, and politicians in particular, are not capable of carrying a propoſition fairly and honeſtly farther than one ſtep in the road to truth, and that is to expediency. Philoſophers have reaſoned deeply on the preference to be given either to public or private education. The people have attended and read; borrowed their ideas, and talked with great gravity; but with little or no effect. Practice has apparently offered the reſult of experiments. Private inſtitutions have been formed, where youth have been taught ſciences, and taught morals with great tenderneſs and care. Theſe are ſupported by unqueſtionable abilities in many of their tutors; and they have the approbation and ſanction of the firſt philoſophers of the age; and yet the public ſchools flouriſh, and ſupport their credit and conſequence with the world. The reaſon is, that indulgent, ill-judging parents, may more eaſily extend their influence over ſmall than over great inſtitutions; and that the ſame falſe care may be, and has been, injurious to private ſchools, which injures families. The public, therefore, who judge only by effects, judge tolerably, when they ſay, that private ſchools may do very well for private perſons, who are to paſs their lives without enterpriſe; but that public ſchools only can form courage, reſolution, and fortitude enough to make great and enterpriſing men.

You are to obſerve, that I am not defending the methods of teaching, or of forming diſpoſitions and characters in any public ſchools now exiſting. As a man, I deſpiſe and deteſt them; as a lover of truth, I muſt trace them fairly into their effects on thoſe diſpoſitions and characters.

To form thoſe principles, which enable us to act in ſociety, ſchools ſhould be imitations of that ſociety, as much as nature and virtue will allow; and ſhould furniſh men with that ſpecies of reſolution and fortitude, which may enable them to act great and important parts in them. The more brutal and ſavage the community, the more brutal and ſavage will be the ſpecies of fortitude produced by an education ſuited to it. Here we may perceive the reaſon why men of the world; men who wiſh to have their children conſpicuous and fortunate; prefer public to private inſtitutions: becauſe, in the former, a ſevere diſcipline, and a ſeries of hardſhips, harden the mind into a reſolution and aſſurance, which are not to be obtained on the common plans of private and indulgent education. If you have recourſe to Mr. Locke's propoſition, that what is gained in fortitude is loſt in virtue—ſo much the better, every prudent parent will think, though he may not ſay it—ſo much the better, in a community where a ſpecies of fortitude is the inſtrument of fortune, and where virtue is not.

It is eſſential to a manly character, that it ſhould be proof againſt the common accidents that produce pain. In this caſe, it is with the mind as it is with the body. Though in youth

the body be tender; yet it is then capable of bearing a much greater variety of changes and ſufferings, than in riper years. In the ſame manner, thoſe parts of the human frame, which are the ſeats of ſenſibility, intelligence, and virtue, are capable of a greater variety of exerciſe, and of ſeverer trials, in youth than in age. The Spartan Legiſlator underſtood this principle: for, by his inſtitutions, the Lacedæmonians were to be trained, by hardſhips and ſufferings, to a life whoſe principle was valour, and whoſe object was military glory. Though his inſtitutions were only the police of banditti, under the name of a ſtate; yet they were wiſely calculated to anſwer his views; and they had one principle eſſential to a good education: for the youth were prepared, by diſcipline, to diſregard and deſpiſe the ſufferings incident to the life they were to lead; they were furniſhed with Spartan Fortitude, to qualify them for Spartan Duties; and they diſcharged them with a ferocious eaſe, tranquility, and pleaſure.

The Athenian Diſcipline was different; it was more tempered with humanity, and more conſonant to nature: and the conſequence of it was, that though the Athenians inhabited a poor and diſadvantageous ſpot, ſurrounded by enterpriſing neighbours, and had vices in their government which had grown up with it, and which could not be eradicated; yet, being nearer nature in their education, diſcipline, morals, and policy, they produced a greater number of wiſe, virtuous, and happy men, than ever appeared in the ſame period of time in the whole world.

The Athenian Fortitude was the neareſt we can ſpecify to the virtue of nature; and it was produced by accuſtoming their youth

youth to reaſon juſtly; to make fair experiments on the value of things; and, by training them in thoſe exerciſes and trials of body and mind, which gave them ſtrength, vigour, reſolution, without ſavageneſs and ferocity; which made them bear the common accidents and misfortunes of life without inſenſibility and without gloom; and enabled them to diſcharge its greateſt and moſt difficult duties, even to defend their country and ſubdue their enemies, without departing from the virtues of humanity.

In Rome they had no idea of virtue, but as it meant fortitude, under the direction of ambition and avarice. The Roman Virtue originated in the ideas and views of robbers; but the Roman Inſtitutions were calculated to produce it, and to ſuch a degree, that, notwithſtanding the diſadvantages of their origin and ſituation, and in ſpite of juſtice, honour, humanity, and all the virtues which ſhould bleſs and diſtinguiſh ſocieties, they became maſters of all the known world.

In modern nations, the prize of glory has been ever obtained by ſome ſpecies of fortitude. In the dark and ſavage periods, which ſucceeded the diſſolution of the Roman Empire, barbarities and villainies of every kind produced an unnatural and horrid ſpecies of reſolution, which ſought dangers, and even courted tortures and death. We have been long emerging from Gothic Barbariſm and Superſtition; but our inſtitutions are too ſtrongly tinctured with them, perhaps ever to admit even of Athenian Virtues. That bold character, which diſtinguiſhes us as men and as citizens; that reſolution, that greatneſs of mind, which leads

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to virtuous and noble actions, is produced in us by a ſavage, injudicious educatoin, and we ever continue ſavage in the diſplay of it. A man, who has been educated with tyranny, cruelty, and injuſtice, may have been diſciplined into hardneſs and reſolution, and may be fit for enterpriſe; but his mind will be tainted with the vices he ſuffered from; and he will be immoral and vicious in ſome way or other. The ſentiments of the ancients, with the diſcipline of the moderns, ſerve to form thoſe groteſque and ſingular characters which were utterly unknown to antiquity; it exhibits men who have been taught, and have had habits given them, at the ſame time, to think and talk well, and to live and act ill.

My object has been to ſhew you that fortitude, like ſtrength and agility, is to be acquired, improved, and directed by education; that it is the virtue which gives us the free and vigorous uſe of our faculties, and enables us to perform all our great and noble actions. Poſſeſſing it, we poſſeſs what is eſſential to our fortune and happineſs: for it will enable us to obtain what we really want, and to bear the loſs of what we really do not. It is the reſult of ſuch reaſonings as theſe——

" Conſider whether you have any thing in your own po-
" wer—Would you have your body perfect? This is not in
" your power.—Would you be always healthy? This is not
" in your power.—Would you have it in your choice to live
" or die? This you cannot have. Your body is ſubject to
" every thing ſtronger and more dexterous than itſelf.—Can you
" have

" have an eſtate when you pleaſe, or ſuch a one as you pleaſe?
" No.—Can you have ſlaves? No.—Cloaths? No.—Houſes?
" No.—Horſes? In truth, none of theſe at your pleaſure.—
" But you would have your wife live, or your children, or
" or your friends; is not this in your power? No, truly.—
" And is there nothing in your power, independant and ina-
" lienable? Can any man make you aſſent to a falſehood? Can
" any man compel you to deſire or act againſt your judgment
" and will; to propoſe, or intend, or exert your purſuits to-
" wards what you do not approve? You ſhould therefore di-
" ſtinguiſh what is liable to reſtraint from what is not; and
" eſteem the one your own property, and the other not."

We might thus be informed from whence weakneſs and fear proceed; and fortify ourſelves againſt all the aſſaults of the paſſions; fortune then could have no hold of us, and we ſhould be ſubject only to Almighty God.

LECTURE XLIII.

FORTITUDE. PART II.

God fixed it certain, that whatever day
Makes man a ſlave, takes half his worth away.

OUR obſervations on fortitude, in the laſt lecture, were in the form of diſquiſitions into its origin and nature. This virtue is not only connected with the great and very important bleſſing of liberty but it may be ſaid to be the foundation of it.

The diviſion of liberty into moral, civil, and religious, is rather unphiloſophical; it is unneceſſary; and often occaſions confuſion and error in the apprehenſions of the people. Civil and religious liberty are only branches or conſequences of moral liberty; and the only real foundation for civil and religious inſtitutions, which may be rational, beneficial and permanent, muſt be in the fortitude, manlineſs, and independance, of the individuals who compoſe them. This is the foundation; the others are ſtructures raiſed upon it; and they exiſt for a ſhorter

ſhorter or longer time, according to its greater or leſſer degrees of firmneſs.

That liberty, which is ſo much talked of, and ſo little enjoyed, ſo little underſtood; that idol of poetic fancy, which a poet never taſted or comprehended, but as men in darkneſs comprehend light, or men in torture imagine happineſs; that beſt gift of Heaven to man, is the immediate reſult of his fortitude.

The vigour and ſtrength of mind, which are the conſequences of early intellectual exerciſe, and a habit of diſtinguiſhing between right and wrong; which holds all the paſſions in full exerciſe, and yet in their proper bounds; which, while it admits of various counteractions, moves the mind along, even without effort, in the great path of virtue:—this is fortitude; and this alone produces liberty.

This ſubject, of liberty, has employed the utmoſt abilities of our ableſt philoſophers: for it has been a queſtion, whether the idea of liberty was not a deluſive one?—Ignorance and wretchedneſs have ſo enſlaved mankind, that they have often contended that ignorance and wretchedneſs were their neceſſary and inevitable portion. Nay, knowledge, in ill-conſtructed communities, has been its own enemy; and in the moſt enlightened modern nations, the human faculties are ſo perverted by barbarous inſtitutions, and men are rendered ſo uncomfortable by errors and cuſtoms, that they diſpute the reality and exiſtence of virtue.

If we view the condition of Europe on the revival of letters; conſider the civil and religious inſtitutions of all its ſtates; and particularly the circumſtances and employment of the people who were ſubject to them—we ſhall not wonder that they ſometimes diſputed the reality of liberty. Objects at a great diſtance, and which never come under the examination of our ſenſes, we may ſometimes doubt even their reality. Though moral liberty be the foundation of civil and religious liberty; and a man who is not thoroughly honeſt will not make a proper member of a free ſtate, or worſhip his God in all caſes according to his conſcience; yet it is not a foundation which will bear every ſuperſtructure. In the moral world there is often a retrograde proceſs from effects to cauſes. Civil and religious inſtitutions, from being the effects of the combined underſtandings and virtues of the people, become in time the cauſes which form thoſe underſtandings and virtues. Hence the variety of national characters, which throws ſo many difficulties in the way of ſpeculative hiſtorians. The influence of theſe inſtitutions is often ſo great, as very nearly to extirpate the propenſities of nature; or to give them a direction almoſt totally contrary to that which they were originally formed to proceed in. It is no wonder that men, formed and educated in theſe inſtitutions, ſhould have various apprehenſions of the ſame objects; that the beſt and moſt enlightened of them ſhould be confuſed and uncertain in their views of truth, and in ſome caſes doubt its exiſtence. Hence the various ſyſtems of morals, policy, and religion; and hence the origin of credulity on the one hand, and of ſcepticiſm on the other. In ſuch confuſion, men of ordinary underſtandings

believe every thing; men of middling underſtandings can juſt riſe high enough to ſee that things are confuſed, and they believe nothing: it is only a ſuperior mind which can perceive order through confuſion, and truth through falſehood; and can reſt with ſatisfaction and happineſs on thoſe principles, which, though a little obſcured by conſtitutions and ſyſtems, are as real and as ſure as the very pillars of the univerſe.

It is in nature only we can find liberty, or in men, or in communities formed according to nature. Little as our knowledge is, it is ſufficient to convince us that Almighty God has created all things to anſwer wiſe and beneficent ends; that theſe ends are anſwered on the whole; and that the apparent, temporary and local deviations from them, though they may not be always to be philoſophically accounted for by men of little penetration, are yet obviouſly in the intention and plan of their Almighty Author, and neceſſary to anſwer his deſigns. The general laws of matter, motion, and vegetation, we are ſubject to in the ſame manner with the leſs complicated works of God. The firſt and moſt univerſal law of morality ſeems to be, that our reflected pleaſures, all degrees of moral ſatisfaction, depend on our conformity to the principles and laws of nature. In this ſenſe there is no liberty; there is no poſſibility of our deviating from the tendencies and directions given by God in the natural and moral world, without forfeiting our happineſs. Philoſophers, who have contemplated the ſubject in this view, have denied the exiſtence of liberty. For ſeeing men endowed with powers which lead to virtue, and having every poſſible motive

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to adhere to it, they perceive a neceſſity on men, ariſing from the nature of the divine government. Thoſe who take the ſubject in another view of it; and perceive that men do not obey the general and regular principles of nature; but ſubmit ſometimes to them, ſometimes to other and inferior ones, according to an undefinable faculty, called choice, maintain that men are free to do good or to do evil, and that this conſtitutes their merit or guilt. If we conſider that many of the productions of human art are ſo exquiſitely conſtructed, that we cannot preciſely define the principles of their operations; are we to wonder that ſo exquiſite, ſo complicated a production as man, ſhould puzzle the reflective faculties of man himſelf; or that the terms which we apply to the principles which actuate him ſhould be equivocal and inaccurate?—It is thus with liberty and ſlavery. When we conſider ourſelves as having original determinations and motives given us by God, to make us even virtuous and happy: at the ſame time that we adore the wiſdom and goodneſs of the contrivance, we perceive the order to be abſolute and invariable; and we have the idea of neceſſity—the neceſſity of being virtuous, in order to be happy; and that the government of God, in this matter, is an abſolute, invariable government. When we conſider ourſelves as having inferior principles, inclinations, and paſſions, which lead to good, under certain reſtrictions; but to evil when indulged to exceſs; and that ſuch is the conſtitution of our nature, that we may occaſionally be determined by ſuperior, and occaſionally by inferior, principles; that, in this ſtate of irregularity and deviation from the great plan of nature, we have a power of deliberation and choice;

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we ſeem to have a conſciouſneſs of liberty to be good or evil, which we ſhould not have, if we were in a more regular and virtuous ſtate. In this caſe, the idea of neceſſity is annexed to a ſtate of perfect virtue and happineſs; and that of liberty to a ſtate of irregularity, vice, and miſery.

On the other hand, when we conſider man as determined by the original ordinances of God to be wiſe, reaſonable, good, and happy: the principles that controul him; the motives that induce him, are ſo admirably harmonized; they give him the vigorous, perfect, and free uſe of all his faculties, and keep the appointed order of the higher and lower in ſuch a manner: they make a man ſo entirely and compleatly the agent of his own felicity, that we conceive this, and this only, to be a ſtate of perfect liberty; the freedom of the mind, in the intire and uncontrouled uſe of all its natural faculties.

When we view man out of the direction of nature; as withdrawing from the inſenſible, though firm and certain, dominion of reaſon, the inſtrument of nature; when, inſtead of being determined by the noble and general motives which make a man virtuous, he attends and ſubmits to one or more inferior inclinations; then he appears to loſe his liberty; and becomes gradually a wretched ſlave, as he ſubmits to thoſe irregular and miſplaced inclinations.

Such is the imperfection of our knowledge; and ſuch is the imperfection of our language, when applied to firſt principles in

the human mind!—the ſame term ſtands for two oppoſite ideas; and the ſame idea is expreſſed by two oppoſite terms. Men have therefore conſidered the ſubject of liberty and neceſſity as a labyrinth, which they can never develop, or out of which they can never extricate themſelves. The truth is, that the moſt perfect ſtate of moral liberty; that in which we have the intire and free uſe of our faculties, and are never controuled or interrupted in the road to happineſs, is that in which we moſt ſtrictly and perfectly attend to and obey the abſolute and invariable laws of nature; and is that which ſome philoſophers have called a ſtate of neceſſity. On the other hand, a ſtate of moral ſlavery is that in which we have loſt that command of ourſelves which is aſſigned us by nature; have loſt the uſe and exerciſe of many of our faculties; and are determined, by falſe motives and irregular paſſions, to be vicious and miſerable. In the firſt caſe, we are under the guidance or government of nature, whoſe influence is abſolute and invariable; but by a wiſe and beneficent Power is rendered inſenſible; and every thought, ſentiment, and action are made our own. In the latter, we are under the guidance of inclinations formed to ſubmit, and therefore more inſolent in power; we feel a repugnance to their dominion, and we experience miſery from their direction.—The firſt is a ſubmiſſion to the direction of a beneficent, but abſolute Power, leading us to happineſs; the other is ſubmiſſion to capricious tyranny, leading to wretchedneſs. This is all we know of liberty and neceſſity; and here we draw the line between moral liberty, which is the free uſe of our faculties, under the direction of God; and moral ſlavery, which is the uſe

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of them only in ſubjection to ſome irregular and uſurping paſſion, or ſome unnatural and unjuſt power.

In the former ſtate, that vigour and ſtrength, which keep all the paſſions and principles in their proper order and direction, might be more accurately called virtue than fortitude. It is when we have been unfortunately thrown in any degree into the latter ſituation, that we have occaſion for fortitude.

Almoſt all religions agree in repreſenting a ſtate of goodneſs as a ſtate of warfare; and many of their alluſions have been to military conduct and cuſtoms: but they have interwoven a general error into their idea of it—that we are placed in this ſtate by the malignity of ſome evil being, who, to effect this purpoſe, muſt be equal, if not ſuperior, to Almighty God; or by the violent reſentment of the Deity, for the miſbehaviour of ſome of our progenitors; and that after we have borne the malice of Satan, or the reſentment of the Deity, through the various ſcenes of this world, the fortunate among us may go to everlaſting joys, and the unfortunate to everlaſting torments. This doctrine, beſides that it will not bear the examination of reaſon, is deſtructive of all moral virtue, whoſe firſt principles and ſupports are in this world. For, if men were to act wholly with a view to the other, this world would be perpetuated a ſcene of vice and wretchedneſs. There is no principle in morality and religion perhaps ſo important, as that knowledge and virtue may in time clear the world of ignorance and vice. This gives riſe to the nobleſt fortitude, and creates

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a generous public ſpirit, unknown to thoſe mean and ſelfiſh ſouls, who comfort themſelves that they are going to heaven, and leave their children, friends, poſterity, and the world, to do as they can for themſelves. It requires a manly and generous ſpirit to avoid this tempting, this general, error; eſpecially as it is inſtilled into us by education; and has the great influence of a prepoſſeſſion.

Civil and religious inſtitutions are the works of men; and in general of the moſt ignorant and vicious of men: for we owe the forms of our governments, and the principles of our various religions, to remote and ſavage ages. There is not a civil government, or a ſyſtem of religion, on the face of the earth, advanced to any conſiderable degree of influence, whoſe plans and principles and doctrines have been contrived in an enlightened period, with the advantages of moral and philoſophical knowledge, and in the calm and leiſure of univerſal peace and univerſal humanity. We ſee, therefore, that as the individuals of modern nations ceaſe to worry and tear each other; lay aſide a ſavage enthuſiaſm in religion; and almoſt all the prejudices and habits of their education, they gradually put on the forms of men; their neighbourhoods, their cities, their kingdoms, ceaſe to be ſcenes of carnage and bloodſhed; and ſoften more and more into the pleaſing habitations of brethen. This is the object of moral virtue, to realize, in this world, by arduous and inceſſant efforts, that happineſs which immoral and daſtardly enthuſiaſts can only dream of hereafter. And this calls for our utmoſt fortitude. We are in the ſtate of a few brave men,

men, aſſociated with an immenſe army of cowards. Vice is in poſſeſſion of all the ſtrong holds of this world; it is enthroned in all its dominions; and preſides at all its ſacred altars; it leads numerous bands, fluſhed with plunder and ſucceſs, againſt the morals, rights, and liberties of mankind; and purſues an immenſe rabble of wretches, who think of nothing but death as a relief, and heaven as a reward for their daſtardly ſufferings. To turn back, and face ſuch an enemy ſingly, or in ſmall diviſions, with a certainty of only bravely ſacrificing our lives, requires the utmoſt fortitude. And yet this may often be the ſtate of virtuous and honeſt men, in almoſt every community under heaven.

Let any wiſe and good man examine his ſituation here, where we are juſtly thought to have many advantages over our neighbours. Let him fix on that point of his life in which he firſt attempts to think and act for himſelf, and aims at forming a moral character; and let him ſay, whether he has not occaſion for fortitude. It cannot be employed in the moſt common offices, or the moſt neceſſary buſineſs, without finding it clogged with cuſtoms, which hurt his integrity, or tarniſh his honour. Here he is reduced to the neceſſity of either wounding his own peace, or of giving up the advantages by which he, and perhaps his family, is to live.

The government and the church treat the conſciences of the people as Procruſtes did his ſlaves and priſoners; he laid them on a bed, which they were exactly to fit: thoſe who were too ſhort he ſtretched, by a rack, to the extremities of it; and

thoſe who were too long he cut and mangled to its ſize. Thus have the pretended vicars and vicegerents of God done by the ſouls of good men; and ſavages and cannibals never invented cruelties ſo enormous and ſo dreadful, even to virtue, as teſts of faith and conditions of preferment, not conſiſtent with the rights of private judgment; which put a good man under a neceſſity of degrading his mind, in his own view, and in the view of God; and of perjuring himſelf to the ſtate; or of being expelled from ſociety; of being ſtarved in it; nay, of being put to an ignominious and violent death. The bed of Procruſtes was a bed of down, to that on which wiſe and virtuous men muſt be often laid, even in our land of light and liberty, to arrive at the honours and emoluments of the community, either civil or ſacred. This furniſhes abundant occaſions for our fortitude; either to ſtop our career in any path of corruption we have taken; or to ſupport us with chearfulneſs under the want of thoſe conveniences, which are offered us at the price of our integrity; and that affluence, in which we ſee perjured and abandoned hypocriſy daily wallowing. Theſe are trials which have proved too ſevere for men of ordinary virtue; but they muſt be borne, and borne by numbers, or the evil will remain. Public profligacy and corruption muſt be checked by private integrity; or good men muſt for ever continue to languiſh and ſuffer in this community.

In ſituations like ours, no virtue can be of greater importance than fortitude. It is by that virtue alone, that, under the diſadvantages of our educations, and againſt the errors and prejudices which are given us, we can recover any degrees of a manly

ly and moral character. It is by that virtue only, in a community where an ill-contrived and ill-conducted commerce has ſubſtituted riches, however acquired, inſtead of merit; where a mean and narrow ſelfiſhneſs is choaking every generous idea; and where corruption is reſtoring thoſe ſanguinary principles, which knowledge and humanity had a little corrected:—in ſuch a ſtate, to avoid participating in public guilt and public infamy, at the expence of the advantages that may attend it; to reſiſt the torrent of public opinion, without being overwhelmed or deſtroyed by it; to bear our teſtimony to the truths of nature and the rights of humanity, while tyrants are frowning at us, and we are menaced with deſtruction:—theſe things require ſtrong and manly minds.

In religion, to tear off thoſe prejudices which ignorance and ſuperſtition have bound round us, like our very ſkins: to acquire real and uſeful knowledge; to exert our utmoſt induſtry in improving our minds, under the diſadvantage and diſcouragement of ſeeing ſervile credulity and unprincipled hypocriſy enjoying the praiſe and countenance of men: to exerciſe and to avow the right of private judgment, the foundation of all knowledge and all religion; while all churches, and all ſects, and almoſt all men, think themſelves warranted to perſecute, or to calumniate, or to diſtreſs us: to preſerve the humanity of our tempers, and a benevolent diſpoſition, while we are diſturbed with the impertinence of ſuperſtitious folly, or worried by the malice of bigotry—require the utmoſt exertions of our fortitude.

LECTURE XLIV.

FORTITUDE. PART II.

If I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

THE largeſt aſſociations and communities of men, whether denominated by civil or religious appellations, are ſubject to miſapprehenſions, and are prejudiced in the ſame manner with individuals: and that quality which they have moſt occaſion for, which they find moſt uſeful and advantageous, is apt to engroſs too great a degree of their attention and regard. This is the origin of public and private vices. They have ever been occaſioned by the exerciſe of ſome talent, or the cultivation of ſome diſpoſition, which, at firſt, and by particular circumſtances, was rendered neceſſary, advantageous, or conducive to great pleaſure; by that means it became a favourite principle; and was allowed an improper and undue influence on the mind. This is obſervable in no caſe more than in that of fortitude, the ſubject of the two laſt lectures. The Romans had no other idea of virtue; I mean the Roman ſenate, and the Roman people. The

works of Cicero and of Seneca breathe the ſpirit of univerſal humanity, and inculcate often the pureſt morals; but they were Greeks, ingrafted on Roman ſtocks; and their general ideas and ſentiments were Greek, and not Roman. The ſame fortitude and valour which firſt protected an aſylum of thieves; which ſecured its exiſtence by the rape of the Sabines; which obtained ſubſiſtence and territory by plunder, ravages, and murders; continued to be the characteriſtic of the Roman people. What was firſt a matter of neceſſity; I mean, neceſſary to the exiſtence and ſecurity of Romulus and his followers, was cheriſhed, coloured, and ſoftened into a national virtue; and was that principle, ſo ſteady, uniform, and aſtoniſhing; and ſo deſtitute of all juſtice, humanity, and goodneſs, by which the Romans gradually encroached on the property and liberty of their neighbours; and when, by means of it, they had made the whole known world a ſcene of devaſtation and cruelty, they ſunk with ignominy in that blood with which they had deluged it. The voice of philoſophy, reaſon, and nature was loſt in the clangour of military glory and military triumphs, mingled with the groans of wretchedneſs and ſlavery; and nothing but events taught the world that the Romans had exhibited only an empty ſhew; that the virtue which characteriſed them; which brought them from obſcurity, gave them unbounded dominion and renown, profited nothing, as it was not under the regulation of humanity and benevolence; and was directed to narrow, ſelfiſh, miſchievous, and not to generous and beneficent, ends.

All modern nations are characteriſed much in the ſame manner with the Romans. The founders of our ſtates, and ſome of

of the Gods whom we have lately worſhipped, were employed in the ſame diſhonourable occupation with the firſt founder, and one of the firſt Gods, of the Roman People. A ferocious reſolution has therefore marked the manners, as it does the countenances, of modern nations; and has hitherto ſet all virtue and knowledge at defiance. This has been often heightened into frantic valour, by the concuſſions of what are called ſtates and empires; by their efforts to annoy and injure each other; and by an univerſal deſire, which poſſeſſed each clan and collection of men, to make all the world, beyond its own boundaries, the abode of ſlavery and wretchedneſs. In ſuch a ſtate, no man could appear on any public ſtage, who was not poſſeſſed of fortitude. Nay, his buſineſs, from the conſtitution and views of the ſociety in which he lived, being to defend himſelf from injuries, and to commit injuries on others, this fierce fortitude muſt become the only principle of his mind. We accordingly find the early periods of our hiſtory, or what are called the days of chivalry, diſtinguiſhed by efforts of fortitude and valour which aſtoniſh us, as they are beyond nature in all its regular and uſeful operations. All frenzies are of this kind, whether produced in communities or in individuals. They are ſingle diſpoſitions, which draw to themſelves all the ſtrength of the community, or of the individual; increaſe to an enormous and unnatural ſize; and produce aſtoniſhing and miſchievous wonders.

The miſchief has been much heightened by a religious enthuſiaſm and ſuperſtition, which have infeſted modern ſocieties. Human nature has never been ſo much diſhonoured and degraded,

in thoſe ſocieties where all the vices and crimes of the moſt ſavage nations, where all the views and pretenſions of men, aſſociated for plunder and injury, were ſaid to be ſanctified by Heaven, and proſecuted under the banners of religion. This ſeems to have been the utmoſt ſtage of human depravity and villainy—to purſue plans, and commit actions, that would ſhock and diſgrace the moſt unciviliſed tribes of Africa, in the name and by the commiſſion of Almighty God. Religion, therefore, which was deſigned to eſtabliſh peace on earth, and good-will among men, added to their confuſion, hatred, and miſery. It furniſhed new and plauſible pretences for oppreſſions; and the man who could not decently injure his neighbour, or a nation who could not decently invade another nation without ſome pretence, was ſure to find one in a falſe religion. The principle on which every ſpecies of perſecution is ſupported, muſt have obtained its firſt credit in a ſtate of extreme barbariſm. The inhabitants of Europe, though they mechanically exerciſed ſome of the arts of the Greeks and Romans, muſt have been in a lower ſtate of depravity than any we are acquainted with, when that unnatural, aſtoniſhing, infernal principle of intolerance, bigotry, and perſecution for opinions, was rooted in their minds, and interwoven with the eſſential parts of their civil and religious conſtitutions. For after they had emerged from their ignorance; conſiderably improved their ſocieties, and extended their depredations to new regions; they found the ſavages of both hemiſpheres too improved, too far advanced in the ſcience of humanity and morals, to admit of the true, genuine, and malignant bigotry of Europe. They have adopted, from neceſſity and

force, almoſt all our other vices; but no cruelty, no barbarity, has hitherto been able to make the ſavages of the old or new world religious bigots.

The hiſtory of martyrdom, it is to be hoped, will be confined to the eccleſiaſtical annals of Europe, where future ages will read, with aſtoniſhment, and perhaps incredulity, that whole nations of wretches, in the human form, not only ravaged each others territories for plunder and glory; but, in times of peace, and from mere cruelty and thirſt of blood, amuſed themſelves with torturing and murdering each other, for a reaſon which would diſgrace the morality of dogs and wolves—becauſe they did not ſee exactly alike, and think exactly alike. This will not be believed in periods of real humanity and knowledge.

Barbarous habits remain, when the reaſons that produced them are ridiculed. We have now too much knowledge to avow bigotry, and even not to be aſhamed of it, but not enough entirely and univerſally to correct our habits. Almoſt every man has ſo much reaſon as to diſclaim, in words, all pretences to dominion over the mind of another; but almoſt all men are bigots by habit; and hardly any man can lay his hand on his heart, and honeſtly ſay—" I never think unfavourably, unkindly, or un-" charitably of another, becauſe his conceptions of things and his " opinions are different from my own."—This, with us, would be a high ſtrain of virtue; and yet, if the truth were fully and fairly known, we have reaſon to ſuſpect it would place us hardly on a level with thoſe inoffenſive and numerous communities,

nities, which we have almoſt depopulated and deſtroyed, in order to have new regions and new theatres, on which to maſſacre and deſtroy each other.

All important circumſtances, in our civil and religious conſtitutions, have concurred in cheriſhing this brutal fortitude, which has been dignified with the names of valour, bravery, and courage. The characters of nations and of individuals have been eſtimated according as they poſſeſſed greater or leſſer degrees of this quality: the inhabitants of provinces, kingdoms, and immenſe empires, where the arts of convenience and the principles of humanity flouriſhed, were denominated ſavages, for not poſſeſſing this moſt ſavage of all diſpoſitions, and for not being acquainted with the arts it put in execution to deſtroy mankind by millions. Theſe remains of Gothic Ignorance and wretchedneſs: this method of eſtimating merit by the capacity of doing injury; and the licence to do it, whenever it can be done; and in the name and for the ſervice of Almighty God—theſe things brand us with a diſhonour which we ſhall never get clear of, until we derive all our knowledge, each for himſelf, and, with modeſty and induſtry, from nature; and until all our governments and religions are inſpired and actuated by benevolence, humanity, and charity.

The genuine principle of fortitude is produced by a juſt experience and conviction, that moral evils are more intolerable than bodily pain; and that any kind of death is to be preferred to a life of diſhonour. This is not only conſiſtent with benevolence; but is its moſt uſeful inſtrument in promoting public hap-

pineſs. It is the foundation of genuine valour, patriotiſm, and generoſity: but it has hardly any affinity with the quality we have been conſidering, and which has had the appellation of valour, bravery, fortitude, and the ſpirit of martyrdom. For this ferocious principle has been every where generated by miſery and by ſufferings. We always obſerve a hardy impetuoſity in dangers, and a diſregard of life, in proportion as men's lives are not worth regarding. Savages, who are in perpetual hoſtilities; who hold life by a precarious tenure; who obtain a ſcanty proviſion with difficulty, and know but few enjoyments, ruſh on death with indifference, and even with alacrity. The bravery of modern armies, and the alacrity with which they meet death, are to be accounted for in the ſame manner. They have no ſhare, but in the vices and evils and hardſhips of life; and they are often glad to get rid of it. Even the ſpirit of martyrdom, ſo much extolled in our eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, and ſo much honoured in our public ſervices, was not without its alloy, from the conſiderations now mentioned, if it did not wholly proceed from them.

If we ſuppoſe the following doctrines once eſtabliſhed—that God, to ſave men the trouble of acquiring knowledge and virtue by experience, had revealed the principles of them to men; with ſome difficulty, however, to underſtand them; and with theſe conditions, that thoſe who underſtood them were to be eternally happy, and thoſe who miſunderſtood them were to be eternally miſerable. This gave an opening for thoſe legiſlators and prieſts, who ſeem to mean nothing by power but the means

means of oppreſſing the people. The difficulty of underſtanding this revelation, and the extreme danger of not underſtanding it, accompliſhed what tyrants have ever aimed at, threw the minds as well as the bodies of the people into their hands. All unjuſt ſpoils become the means of conteſts; and men ſoon quarrelled who ſhould have the greateſt ſhare in this dominion over men's ſouls. They ſet up contradictory interpretations of what they called the will of God; and their common depredations on each other were rendered more frequent and more barbarous by religious pretences. This is the origin of that implacable hatred with which religious ſects regard each other; and this is the origin of that uncommon reſolution with which men died for the faith of their ſects. Hoſtilities and cruelties kept up that ferocious fortitude and contempt of death, which is common to all wretched and ſavage nations. If we ſuppoſe, added to this, a perſuaſion that they underſtood the will of God; and that their ſufferings entitled them to immortal joys; we ſee the reaſons which produced the ſpirit of martyrdom; and we ſee that whole nations may poſſeſs it, without profit to themſelves or to the world. The Indian priſoner of war, who comes to the ſtake with chearfulneſs, and provokes his tormentors to tear his fleſh from his bones, is actuated by the ſame ſpirit, and by the ſame hopes, with the glorious army of martyrs, who were generally priſoners of war, were caught in hoſtilities, and were ſacrifices to ambition, avarice, and revenge.

I do not mean to ſay there have been no martyrs to truth, in the ſpirit of benevolence and humanity. The Evangeliſts

every where repreſent Chriſt as attempting to correct the ſuperſtition of the Jews, and to lead them to their ſimple, ancient worſhip of the one true God; that he declined all ambitious projects; and when condemned as a malefactor, ſubmitted to his fate with unaffected patience and fortitude; and prayed that God would forgive his ignorant murderers. This is an example every way favourable to the virtue and happineſs of mankind. But the ſufferings of his followers, whether inflicted by enemies or by each other, ſeldom exhibited a ſpirit ſimilar to that of their maſter; and St. Paul, even in his time, ſaw reaſon to warn his hearers that they might ſuffer death on a wrong and uſeleſs principle.

The death of Socrates alſo exhibits a great degree of genuine fortitude, and in a very ſtriking light. And, if we perfectly underſtood the moral and metaphyſical idioms of the Greek Language, we ſhould probably have leſs objection to the motives of his conduct; which, according to our methods of rendering the phraſes of Plato, have too much the air of ſuperſtition. For he is determined by a metaphorical perſonage, which he calls his demon; and which probably was his underſtanding or his conſcience. Plato ſays—" He quitted life with a ſerene joy and " noble intrepidity."—His friends aſking him the reaſon;—" I " hope," ſays Socrates, " to be re-united to the good and per- " fect Gods, and to be aſſociated with better men than thoſe I " leave upon earth." This has been adopted as the beſt and univerſal principle of martyrdom—an intrepidity grounded on diſſatisfaction, and animated with the hope of reward. But here

the language even of Socrates is not the ſimple and genuine language of virtue. He ſhould have ſaid—"I die with ſerene "reſolution, and reſigned tranquility, becauſe I cannot live with- "out diſhonour to myſelf, and to that virtue which I have "held before my country. I cannot heſitate in my determina- "tion; and I cannot fear what I deliberately chuſe. It is by "ſuch conduct that virtuous men may hope to correct the fol- "lies and vices of the world; and I have more ſatisfaction in "the hope of benefiting mankind by my example, and giv- "ing the higheſt teſtimony of my adherence to truth, than I "could have from any events of a life granted me by iniqui- "ty and oppreſſion. As for my reward, I have had it amply "in every good intent and action of my life; and I look to "futurity with the certainty, that, if my exiſtence be continued, "and I am called upon to act there, I ſhall act as I have done "here, with the advantage of more experience, more knowledge, "and more virtue."—This is fortitude, united with benevolence; the other is apt to degenerate into a ſelfiſh traffic with Hea- ven. It is noble to reſign a life of goodneſs and enjoyment, with views that reſpect the virtue and happineſs of mankind more than yourſelf: it is not ſo praiſe-worthy to reſign a life which you decry as worthleſs and miſerable, only with the view of obtaining another, which is infinitely preferable. In this re- ſpect, numbers have given their bodies to be burned without charity; without any views but ſuch as terminated in their own future reward and future advantages: and ſuch fortitude profiteth little or nothing.

If, therefore, all thoſe brilliant virtues which have diſtinguiſhed men in ſociety, and have tranſmitted their memories with honour to ſucceeding ages: if that reſolution which denominates us brave; makes us give protection to our families; defend our country; and extend its dominion and renown: if that zeal for truth, virtue, and religion, which makes us undergo any dangers in their intereſt; ſubmit to death; and even ſeek and glory in it:—if theſe things profit nothing, when not directed by benevolence, not mingled with humanity, and not exerted for the peace and happineſs of mankind—what are all thoſe little, paltry qualities, which ordinary men, and particularly the common profeſſors of religion, pretend to put in competition with charity?

The Apoſtle deſcribes this virtue with great minuteneſs; and ſtrongly marks its ſuperior importance to prophecy, alms-giving, the ſpirit of martyrdom; to faith in Chriſt, and the hope of heaven; and the chapter I have read* cannot be too often and too attentively conſidered by thoſe who pretend to believe he ſpoke by inſpiration, while they contradict all he hath ſaid, by every thought and action of their lives.

I would alſo recommend the following ſpecimen of candour, benevolence, and charity, as the beſt definition I can give of them. It is written by a modern Indian Bramin, or prieſt; and it would do honour to any prieſt, and to any religion, in the world, as it does to that of the Gentoos.

* I. Cor. c. xiii.

" From men of enlightened underſtanding and ſound judg-
" ment, who, in their ſearching after truth, have ſwept from
" their hearts the duſt of malice and oppoſition, it is not con-
" cealed, that the contrarieties of religion, and diverſities of be-
" lief, which are cauſes of envy and of enmity to the ignorant,
" are, in fact, a manifeſt demonſtration of the power of the Su-
" preme Being: for it is evident that a painter, by ſketching a
" multiplicity of figures, and by arranging a variety of colours,
" procures a reputation among men; and a gardener, for plant-
" ing a diverſity of ſhrubs, and for producing a number of
" different flowers, gains credit and commendation: wherefore
" it is abſurdity and ignorance to view in an inferior light
" him who created both the painter and the gardener. He ap-
" pointed to each tribe its own faith, and to every ſect its own
" religion; and having introduced a numerous variety of caſts,
" and a multiplicity of different cuſtoms, he views in each par-
" ticular place the mode of worſhip particularly appointed to it:
" ſometimes he is employed, with the attendants upon the moſque,
" in counting ſacred beads; ſometimes he is in the temple, at
" the adoration of idols; the intimate of the Muſſulman, the
" friend of the Hindoo; the companion of the Chriſtian; and
" the confidant of the Jew. The differences and varieties of
" created things are rays of his glorious eſſence, and types of
" his wonderful attributes."

LECTURE. XLV.

MEEKNESS.

Bleſſed are the meek; for they ſhall inherit the earth.

SOME of the greateſt evils of life have ever been owing to ſuch miſtakes as very naturally ariſe from a negligent, injudicious, or wrong method of teaching us the uſe of reaſon. The virtues of morality are ſo little the reſult of our moral conſtitution, as it is uſually formed; and ſo little attended to, when our firſt apprehenſions and habits are given us, that we afterwards find it neceſſary to hold them and their conſequences ſeparately before the mind; and to have recourſe to thoſe arts which may excite deſire and paſſion in their favour. The method of guiding the faculties of the mind to virtue, is like that by which the uſe of our limbs is given us, *i. e.* by obſerving and obeying the tendencies and diſpoſitions of nature. But men have not yet acquired knowledge ſufficient to ſee thoſe tendencies, and truſt to their deductions. They are but juſt emerging from a barbariſm, which not only ſuppreſſed their underſtandings, but ſhut up and rendered uſeleſs their bodily eyes.

All

All the ſciences and all the religions of ſavages might be often harmleſs, if they were only pretended to be ſupernatural; but they are ignorantly and audaciouſly made uſe of to aſſiſt nature. Hence the prepoſterous maxims of thoſe great enemies to the health and virtue of the world—nurſes and prieſts: for at one and the ſame time, and with exactly the ſame pretences, nurſes contrived ſwaddling cloaths to give a child the uſe of his limbs; and prieſts bound up the human faculties, to make men rational and moral. The world ſeems to have made an amazing effort, even to diſpute the dominion of the nurſes; and it is doubtful whether in the end it may be ſucceſsful: but when it will dare to face tyranny and ſuperſtition; when the mind ſhall be left unſwaddled with errors and prejudices, and men may learn the uſe of their faculties, as well as their limbs, from nature—God only knows!—At preſent, the care taken to make us good, like-that taken with our bodies, is nearly ſo much injury; and, if nature were not irreſiſtible, neither the mind nor the body would anſwer any of its intended purpoſes.

The practice of virtue, in all its branches; which conſiſts in the proper uſe of our mental powers; is as natural as the uſe of our bodily limbs. The real ſcience of morality, and indeed the reſult of all the other ſciences, is to find out and to obſerve the tendencies and diſpoſitions of nature, and to lead the mind, according to their direction, to the utmoſt poſſible variety of action and enjoyment. If that knowledge called anatomy be juſtly honoured and admired, becauſe it diſcovered the principles on which the bones and muſcles and nerves perform their common

and general offices, and is prepared to aſſiſt and relieve them; what muſt that ſublimeſt and moſt uſeful of all ſciences be, which may be called moral anatomy; and which diſcovers the principles on which the faculties of the mind perform their ſeveral offices?—As morality is ſuperior to anatomy, it requires abilities proportionably ſuperior to inveſtigate its truths; and moral errors will remain, after anatomical ones are removed.—This is the reaſon that the mind continues under the dominion of prieſts, when the body has been freed from the tyranny of nurſes. The uſe of the bodily muſcles, and the injuries done them, are within the compaſs of our anatomical knowledge; and ſcience may ſubdue prejudice: the uſe of our mental powers is not yet in our moral ſcience; we therefore continue bound round with prejudices and errors.

Morality, inſtead of being the reſult of nature, in the free and diligent exertion of its powers, is taught as a thing out of nature; or, as ſome people impiouſly pretend, as a thing above nature. It is then called religion; it is divided into ſeveral duties, with the ſanctions of promiſes and puniſhments. When we aim to get poſſeſſion of this morality, or this religion, we are obliged to take the ſeveral parts of it in detail; and many of us acquire only one part, or only a few good qualities and virtues. When we become juſt; not becauſe the natural ſtate and diſpoſition of our minds inclines us to be ſo, which would, at the ſame time, incline us to all goodneſs; but becauſe we have perſuaded ourſelves to become juſt; becauſe we cannot deal with each other without juſtice; becauſe, by being juſt, we muſt avoid the penalty

nalty of the laws here, and the fangs of Satan through all eternity: when, with great pains and great difficulty, we have cajoled and frightened ourſelves thus far into morality—we are fit to paſs in moſt ſocieties in the world; and the other virtues we learn at our leiſure, and as we are called upon to exerciſe them. This is the reaſon of that groteſque and mutilated appearance of men in the moral world. One man poſſeſſes one virtue, and another poſſeſſes another; but all are defective in great numbers of virtues; and they look like a community wholly conſiſting of perſons who are either deaf, or dumb, or lame, or blind.

In ſuch a ſtate of things, we cannot be too much on our guard, leſt an attention to one virtue ſhould carry it into a vice. Thus fortitude, which we have been lately conſidering, is apt to become obſtinacy, unleſs it be tempered by meekneſs.

It would not be neceſſary to oppoſe one virtue to another, as we correct one quality by another, if morality were not become a ſcience, to be taught after the mind has been injured by prejudices. This is ſo much the caſe; children have been univerſally ſo injured, in the firſt years of their lives, that when they have attempted the uſe of their faculties, it has been in ſo uncouth, in ſo random and perverſe a manner, that it has often been a problem of ſome difficulty, whether reaſon and virtue were natural to man?—The world has even divided on the ſolution of it; the good-natured part believed favourably, becauſe charity hopeth all things; the ill-natured, for a contrary reaſon,

believed

believed men were children of wrath, inclined to evil, and designed for everlasting damnation. These are shocking consequences of a few errors in the first treatment of man. They are now grown into enormous monsters; they infect the atmosphere with their pestilential breath; and blast almost all the virtues from the face of the earth.

We are under a necessity to accommodate ourselves to our situation; and if we cannot become virtuous, as nature designed we should, by education, experience, and habit; we must have recourse to art, and adopt the principles of goodness, as we can introduce them into our minds. In this state we are in perpetual danger, from an error which nature only is secure from; that of attending too much to one virtue, and cherishing it, at the expence of another. Nothing is more common, when we have acquired fortitude to sustain the duties of a manly character, than to be so inattentive to the virtuous pliancy and amiable meekness with which nature would have tempered it, and fitted us for society; that our firmness becomes obstinacy, and our virtue an injurious, oppressive vice. It is thus that men of ordinary understandings become tyrants in their families, or in society; and they call it being firm: and it is thus that women, whose characteristic quality was not designed to be fortitude, when they take a fancy to that virtue, generally become obstinate, and unfit for their stations and duties. This is the reason, when we have resolved to act great, manly, and generous parts, we should recollect we are ever to act them with meekness.

The ſame confuſion which has been exhibited in the actions of men, may be ſeen in their apprehenſions and opinions. Indeed the one is ever the conſequence of the other. No man acts wrong, who thinks juſtly; and vice is the conſequence, as well as the cauſe, of ſome miſapprehenſion in the mind. The ſtate of man has been ſo much a ſtate of war, though it be not ſo by nature, that the gentle virtues, which contribute to the higheſt enjoyment of life, have but ſeldom obtained any influence or credit with him. The various intervals of peace, in Europe, for ages, have only been breathing-times, in order to renew hoſtilities and depredations with more vigour. Our factitious morality, or religion, has taken its colour from a military character; and humility, moderation, and meekneſs, have been looked upon and ſpoken of as inſignificant and effeminate qualities. A man, in paſſing through life, eſtimated his conſequence by the miſchief he occaſioned, and the terror he impreſſed: his power and his glory were derived from the fears, and not from the affections of mankind. Though our warlike character, in this country, is wearing off; and the injuries and cruelties we wiſh to commit, we have not even the brutal courage to commit ourſelves; yet our habits of thinking, and what may be called our traditionary morality, is of the ſame nature. It is ſaid, that, in the Weſt Indies, the wretched Negroes dread the diſpleaſure of their miſtreſſes much more than that of their maſters: for the maſter will either inſtantly puniſh them himſelf, or order them to be puniſhed before him: but the miſtreſs will give directions for a puniſhment much more cruel, which ſhe can neither inflict, or bear to ſee inflicted. It is not a proof

that our morality is humanized and improved, becauſe we do not actually commit the injuries which formerly gave us military renown. Nay, it may be degenerated into that effeminate cruelty above deſcribed; and we have reaſon to think that the generous, though warlike, ſpirit of our anceſtors, would have ſcorned to have committed actions, which, like timid and cruel women, we dare not perpetrate ourſelves; dare not ſee perpetrated; but order them to be committed by the loweſt and worſt ſavages, the refuſe of the moſt unprincipled and abandoned communities in the world. The character of the Engliſh has not been improved in humanity, though it has advanced in ſoftneſs; and its prejudices, in regard to virtues and vices, ſtill remain. Though its military glory is fading apace; yet all its apprehenſions and opinions are in favour of the military character. It will be difficult, therefore, to repreſent meekneſs in ſuch a manner as to ſecure it from the affected contempt of this degenerate, this effeminate, barbariſm. When Themiſtocles diſputed the commands of the Lacedæmonian General, who conducted the confederate fleets of Greece, the General lifted up his cane to ſtrike him—"Strike," ſays Themiſtocles, "but hear me." This ſublime meekneſs; this mild heroiſm, would be totally incomprehenſible to a modern bluſtering and ferocious warrior; who ſeems always to haſten revenge, and to hurry the reſentment of an injury, leſt his own courage ſhould fail him. Meekneſs, therefore, is even farther removed from meanneſs, and an effeminate daſtardlineſs, than fortitude and valour; as it requires a much firmer, nobler, and more exalted mind, to have acted like Themiſtocles, than to have performed the exploits of Achil-

les;

les; to have ravaged Asia, like Alexander; or to have destroyed the Americans by millions, like Cortes or Pizzarez. Meekness is that noble mildness and pliancy of character, which, while we act with manly resolution, and pass through life with spirit, makes us proceed in the most inoffensive way to others; to avoid injuring them, or raising their apprehensions; and to owe our reputation and happiness wholly to their affections.

What renders this excellent virtue most subject to misapprehension, is the quality which characterises it; and which is a watchful caution, and something like an amiable timidity, lest it should in any manner injure and offend; or lest it should omit any thing which might benefit or oblige. This constitutes the peculiar charm of the female sex. It is their philosopher's stone. It is the secret which diffuses over them that undefinable something, which fascinates all beholders, and always carries the prize from beauty and from wit. The characteristic delicacy and sensibility of women render this virtue more conspicuous in them; and some peculiar circumstances in their situation, make it more necessary to them than to us. For though they are not our drudges and slaves, as they are in more savage communities; yet reason and candour must acknowledge, that they are not, in any community on earth, on a just and equitable footing with men, in the enjoyment of their domestic, social, or civil rights. An anxiety to oblige, and an apprehension of disobliging, is more peculiarly a feminine virtue; where they have not only the common reasons which should affect the whole community; but are subject besides to the power and ca-

prices of men. This quality, however, gives them their revenge; by means of it, they wreſt power even from tyrants and deſpots; and they remarkably and literally fulfil the prophecy of the Evangeliſt, that "the meek ſhall inherit the earth." For they diſarm cruelty by timidity; and uſe that power, dominion, and wealth, which brutal ferocity or fraud may have obtained. This virtue is therefore commonly allotted to women; and a man would conſider it as a reproach to be called meek. It ſeems to be his character to deſpiſe dangers, or not to be apprehenſive of them; to be heedleſs of the injuries he does, becauſe he muſt fear no reſentment; and to be inattentive to the arts of conciliating and obliging, becauſe he can force obedience to his will. Who does not ſee, that theſe moral principles, which form our general characters, are of Gothic and barbarous origin; that they are derived from men who lived in a ſtate of rapine; and have no foundation in nature?

The meekneſs which we aſſign to women, as their property, is but a ſpurious and fictitious virtue: I mean as it is practiſed by them in their preſent ſituations. They are under a neceſſity of avoiding injuries which they cannot repel; and managing circumſtances which they cannot controul: and it muſt be owned, they make an admirable virtue of neceſſity. They oppoſe avowed weakneſs to ſtrength; fear to impetuous courage; and bondage to unlimited power: and, by theſe means, not only obtain terms from man; but govern and command him.

If this virtue, ariſing from neceſſity; that neceſſity created by unnatural and iniquitous cuſtoms, reducing women to hard and dif-

ficult ſituations—if this fictitious virtue, as it may be called, thus generated and forced into practice, be ſo amiable, ſo noble, ſo effectual, what would be that genuine diſpoſition to avoid offences; to bear little inconveniencies, and to do obliging offices, which reſults from the frame and temper of the mind, and acts wholly from a view to the happineſs of ſociety?—There is nothing in this diſpoſition which ſhould confine it to women: and perhaps there is no greater reproach to our morality and religion, than that this virtue ſhould be baniſhed out of them, and taken up by the female ſex, to defend them againſt our injuſtice and our injuries.

In proportion as our power to do good or to do evil increaſes, ſo ſhould that anxiouſneſs, to uſe them as we ought, increaſe; and meekneſs impreſſes a character on ſtrength, power, and valour, much more noble and affecting, than it can on weakneſs and puſillanimity.

When we ſee a man with extenſive abilities to do good, and yet ſolicitous not to loſe the ſmalleſt occaſions of employing them; or with power to do injuries with ſafety and impunity, and yet anxious to avoid the leaſt occaſion of hurting or offending another:—this is a nobler, becauſe more genuine, virtue, than what is commonly called meekneſs; which is produced by fear of reſentment or puniſhment, from the perſons we wiſh to ſooth or to oblige.

The occaſions for exerciſing this virtue; and the advantages attending it, are innumerable. There is no ſituation in which

is not neceſſary. It prevents the abuſe of all kinds of power; nay, it often diſarms tyranny, when aiming its bloody knife at our throats. It is the charm that holds friends together; it is the very ſpark that kindles the flame of genuine and conſtant love; it is that undefinable quality, which diffuſes equal happineſs through all the members of a good family; which makes parents and children friends, though not equals; and which mingles the hearts of brethren and ſiſters, though of very different diſpoſitions and tempers. If it be not the moſt prompt and ſpeedy inſtrument of ambition, it is the only means of ſecuring and enjoying what it obtains; and if our hopes be not deluſive, that real knowledge and humanity will at laſt prevail over ignorance, ſuperſtition, and barbarity—the Evangeliſt had good reaſons for ſaying, that, at ſome future time, "the meek ſhall in-"herit the earth."

LECTURE

LECTURE XLVI.

PATIENCE.

Concerning all the calamities that men ſuffer by divine fortune—ſupport with patience thy lot, be it what it will, and never repine at it; but endeavour what thou canſt to remedy it: and conſider, that fate does not ſend theſe misfortunes to good men.

PATIENCE is a virtue, acknowledged by all men to be uſeful in this world. How there came to be ſo much occaſion for it; how evil ſhould be the neceſſary means of good; or, if not, how it came to be admitted into the divine government; why there ſhould be a general plan, and general principles, in nature, which lead to univerſal order and happineſs; and why theſe things ſhould occaſionally be deviated from, and temporary diſorders and unhappineſs be permitted; why this world ſhould have been beautifully conſtructed, all its parts and elements arranged according to their gravity and uſe; why the Almighty Hand which formed, ſhould not have preſerved it in eternal order and peace; why temporary warfares ſhould have

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ariſen among its principles; why the fire which animated, ſhould have often torn its very entrails, brought its center to its ſurface, and precipitated cities and regions and nations into an immenſe and deſtructive abyſs; why theſe waters, to which he ſeemed to have aſſigned unalterable bounds, ſhould have often, as it were, ſet the laws of nature at defiance, deluged the face of the earth, and ſwept off its productions and inhabitants; why, in the moral world, where we ſee evident proviſions for virtue and happineſs, in the powers of the individual, in the ſocial affections, and the principles of policy, dictated by nature, men, whole nations of men, ſhould be vicious and miſerable!—theſe are queſtions which we have not ſufficient knowledge to determine upon; the clear deciſion of all which is not abſolutely neceſſary to our happineſs; and yet, without ſome general ſatisfaction on them, we can hardly hope to bear the evils of life with patience.

Men, in all ages, have ſought this ſatisfaction; and it has probably been ever proportioned to the degree of underſtanding and knowledge which they poſſeſſed. Man comes into this world totally ignorant whence and how he came; what he is come for; and whither he goes. Milton deſcribes Adam in this ſituation, as poets often do, with more fancy than truth.

" ———— Thou ſun, ſaid I, fair light,
" And thou enlightened earth, ſo freſh and gay,
" Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,
" And ye that live and move, fair creatures! tell,
" Tell, if ye ſaw, how came I thus, how here?

" While

" While thus I call'd, and ſtray'd, I knew not whither,
" From where I firſt drew air, and firſt beheld
" This happy light—when anſwer none return'd,
" On a green ſhady bank, profuſe of flowers,
" Penſive I ſat me down."———

Milton then ſets him to ſleep, and ſolves his difficulties in a dream. This may ſerve for poetical amuſement, but not for moral uſe. We have no authority, but that of tradition and poetry, and worſe we cannot well have, that men have ever acquired faculties and knowledge in any way but by experience. A man with perfect faculties, without knowledge, in a world where the faculties are always formed by gradual acquiſitions of it, would be as unnatural as a tree produced at full growth without air or water, and without any of the proceſſes eſſential to its formation. If we aim at knowledge and virtue, we muſt regard truth, and not poetry; and ſeldom or never believe in monſters, however deſcribed, which we have not ſeen and examined ourſelves. It is not till man has learnt the uſe of his general faculties; to provide for his wants, to aſſociate himſelf with others, for his comfort and happineſs, that he looks into cauſes: for we are not to reckon that thoſe, who, in early life, and like brainleſs birds, are taught to chatter concerning the Deity, know any thing of him. Indeed, this method prevents their ever knowing him: for prepoſſeſſion always prevents knowledge, by occupying its place; and the Deity is no where ſo little known; ſo little underſtood; ſo apt to be ridiculed and blaſphemed, as among thoſe people who teach their children to miſappre-

miſapprehend him, by their catechiſms, prayers, hymns, and other improper and miſchievous compoſitions. This ſubject ſhould be withheld from young people, till their faculties are formed; and then, if we did not hear the name of God ſo often uſed, we ſhould not hear ſo much childiſh, impertinent, and diſguſting abſurdity concerning him; or be ſhocked, as we now are, by ſuperſtitious, as well as by profligate, impiety. There are no principles in mathematics, or mechanics, more indiſputable, than that we know nothing of God, but by his works; and that this knowledge is acquired by experience. This is the original reaſon of men's various apprehenſions of him; as, from their experience, and their ſituation, they have ſeen various degrees of his wiſdom and goodneſs.

What revolutions this world has undergone, we cannot know, previous to thoſe which removed the waters from the regions which are now inhabited; and which, by tradition, poetry, hiſtory, and ancient monuments, do not ſeem to have been occupied by their preſent inhabitants from any very remote antiquity. Men, in this latter period, ſeem to have been in a progreſſion, from a ſtate but a little above brutality, to various degrees of excellence, with the aſſiſtance of ſome traditions of a former ſtate, which they refer to with expreſſions of admiration and regret. The preſent, however, is the ſtate of mankind, of which we have any knowledge, and with which we have any buſineſs; and it is probable that the various fables of creation, and of the origin of man, have referred to the commencement of this period. But we muſt beware of fables. Children and

fools.

fools only can be deceived and amuſed by them; and it is at the expence of their very capacity for accurate and real knowledge.

In the rudeſt and moſt wretched ſtate of man, he has found ſo much wiſdom and goodneſs in the arrangements of nature, for his ſupport and his happineſs, that he has ſuppoſed the author of them to be wiſe and good; he has perceived that it is the ſuggeſtion or intention of this principle of wiſdom and goodneſs, or this wiſe and good God, that he ſhould by ſuch means obtain ſuch ends; that by acts of virtue he ſhould be happy, whatever difficulties ſhould be in his way: and this is his firſt reaſon for patience.

But the firſt efforts of individuals, or of ſocieties, not being always effectual; and errors and vices involving men in miſery; matters became more complicated and perplexed. They had ſuppoſed the Divine Being to be wiſe and good; and the world deſigned by him to be the abode of happineſs. But this deſign did not take place, at leaſt, not compleatly and univerſally; and they were perplexed for reaſons to ſupport their patience. They ſeem to have looked back to a former ſtate, in which men, whom they acknowledged their ſuperiors, had exiſted; and whom they called Gods, or Heroes, or Angels; and they attributed the introduction of evil to the fall of theſe ſuperior beings, or to the tranſmigration of their ſouls into the bodies of common men. It is not at all improbable, in thoſe aſtoniſhing and univerſal convulſions, of which this world has certain and in-

diſputable marks, but that ſmall remains of improved nations might be precipitated, as it were, among rude and ignorant ones; and, by the advantages they took of them, and the vices they introduced among them, give to ardent and inaccurate enthuſiaſts grounds for imagining the deſcent of Gods; the enterpriſes of heroes; the fall of angels; the tranſmigration of ſouls; and the introduction of evil, like the conveyance of any commodity, from one world to another.

It was in theſe apprehenſions that the devil had his origin: for, the real authors of evil diſappearing, or the imaginary ones being inviſible, they were ſuppoſed to be ſpirits; and as all vicious communities muſt have a king, Satan was raiſed to this dignity. His power has every where depended on the quantity of evil in each ſtate where he has been ſuppoſed to exiſt. In ſome wretched ones, he has been ſaid to diſpute the empire of the univerſe with the Almighty; *i. e.* the cauſes of miſery were ſo nearly equal to thoſe of happineſs, that the ſufferers could not but apprehend the powers that occaſioned them were alſo equal.

The idea of compleat and virtuous happineſs, as deſigned for man, could not, however, be relinquiſhed. It was proved by experience to be poſſible; but errors and vices ſo much prevailed; or, as they termed it, the dominion of the devil was ſo general, and ſo much intermixed with that of God, that men gave up the cauſe of goodneſs in this world: and this, perhaps, and not the famous argument of Socrates, firſt produced the gene-

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ral doctrine of a future ſtate. In the conſtitution of man, as an individual, in his ſocial and public affections, there were evident principles of happineſs; but happineſs was not enjoyed in this world; the intentions of God were not to be diſappointed, though they allowed they might be ſuſpended; and what the devil would not permit here, they ſuppoſed would certainly take place hereafter. This kind of reaſoning, united to the general perſuaſion of ignorance, that all effects were produced by ſpirits, and all bodies the habitations of them, gave riſe to a ſtrong perſuaſion, that the errors and defects of government in this world were to be made up in another; and that if good men could not be happy here, they ſhould certainly be ſo hereafter.

In what malignant brain, or in what deplorable, and gloomy ſtate, the doctrine of eternal damnation was generated, it is impoſſible to imagine. It muſt be a wretch, indeed, both in his underſtanding and his heart, who could ſuppoſe the principles of wiſdom and goodneſs, which actuate nature, ſo ineffectual; or the government of God ſo feeble, that Satan ſhould not only interrupt it here, but carry off the greater part of his ſubjects hereafter, and divide the dominion of eternity with him.

Whatever might be the cauſes of theſe doctrines, they became the general principles of morality. This world was depreciated into a deſart; a vale of tears; a ſtate of trial; the ordeal of virtue; and the theatre where God and Satan were to diſtinguiſh their votaries, in order to tranſport them to their future dominions.

All the virtues and vices of men have received a particular character from theſe doctrines, wherever they have been adopted. The nature of patience was particularly affected. For, inſtead of being a diſpoſition to bear inconveniencies and difficulties, in the diligent purſuit of our duty, it became a diſpoſition content to ſuffer all the evils which could be inflicted; and even ſeeking and ſoliciting miſery here, in order to be intitled to a greater reward hereafter.

Small errors in firſt principles lead to aſtoniſhing differences in remote conſequences. No two characters can well be more unequal, in nature and value, than the man who patiently bears only the evils which he cannot remove or remedy, and puſhes through them into manly and ſocial duties; and the ſolitary anchorite, or the hermit, who bears and denies himſelf, until he is totally uſeleſs, in hopes of being rewarded in heaven.

What God deſigns ſhould become of us after death; whether the parts and principles of which we are formed are to be reunited, with a conſciouſneſs of former exiſtence, and with a deſign to carry on the improvements we have made here; or to be diſſipated among the common ſtock of materials which are continually made uſe of by his Almighty Power and infinite wiſdom, are, in the preſent ſtate of things, queſtions of great importance; becauſe they affect the very nature and principles of men's morality. The virtues are eſſentially different, which proceed from a diſpoſition to be happy here, and thoſe which refer their effects to another world.

We

We may inſtance in patience; which a heathen philoſopher would deſcribe thus.——

"To ſupport ills with patience is not only conſonant to rea-
"ſon; but alleviates the ills for the preſent, and intirely heals
"them for the future. The ſick man, who vexes at his con-
"dition, does but increaſe his diſorder. A man, whoſe lot is
"poverty, and who bears it with patience, is not only exempt
"from grief and melancholy, but finds in it ſome conſolation:
"for, on the one hand, his underſtanding and good ſenſe not being
"diſordered or perplexed by his affliction, he will find means to
"gain his bread honeſtly; and, on the other hand, his neighbours,
"ſtruck with admiration at his patience, ſo full of reaſon and
"prudence, will contribute what they can to comfort him. But
"he who repines, and flies into a paſſion, adds wilful grief and
"melancholy to his misfortune; and, by keeping his mind bent
"on miſery, and by deploring it without ceaſing, grows inca-
"pable of procuring to himſelf the leaſt relief, and puts him-
"ſelf out of condition to receive comfort from his friends; un-
"leſs it be that charity, which is much leſs honourable and
"ſatisfactory than the relief and ſupport which every man ſhould
"receive from his own virtue and his own conſtancy." This patience is the effect of a knowledge of our duties; of a conſciouſneſs that we are able to perform them; and none but great and good minds can poſſeſs it.

The other virtue ſeems to have ariſen from conditions of miſery which were thought to be hopeleſs in this world. It is accom-

accompanied with weakneſs, indolence, and deſpair; it prevails moſt in ignorant and wretched ſocieties; and it is gradually leſſened in more enlightened and happy ones. The language of it is, "Submit; for it is in vain to ſtruggle. Submit to every "thing; for evil is the portion of humanity here. Rejoice in "miſery, and be exceeding glad; for, on this very account, "great will be your reward in heaven. The higheſt perfection "of your virtue is to be indifferent to the events of this world, "and to what becomes of you here; and to reſerve your good "qualities and enjoyments for a better ſtate."

In that diſpoſition which induces us to bear life itſelf, when it becomes a matter of patience ſo to do, theſe virtues are extremely different.

Shakeſpeare, whoſe poetic genius always ſelected the beſt reaſons which had been aſſigned for the morals he inculcated, but had no philoſophic talents to inveſtigate and to find out better, gives to Hamlet the beſt reaſons he knew of for that patience which would prevent ſuicide.

"———————— To die; to ſleep—
"To ſleep!—perchance to dream—Ay, there's the rub:
"For, in that ſleep of death, what dreams may come,
"When we have ſhuffled off this mortal coil,
"Muſt give us pauſe—There's the reſpect
"That makes calamity of ſo long life:
"For who would bear the whips and ſcorns of time,

"The

" The oppreſſor's wrong the proud man's contumely,
" The pangs of deſpis'd love, the law's delay,
" The inſolence of office, and the ſpurns
" That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
" When he himſelf might his *quietus* make
" With a bare bodkin?—Who would fardels bear,
" To groan and ſweat under a weary life;
" But that the dread of ſomething after death—
" The undiſcover'd country, from whoſe bourn
" No traveller returns—puzzles the will,
" And makes us rather bear the ills we have,
" Than fly to others that we know not of?
" Thus conſcience does make cowards of us all;
" And thus the native hue of reſolution
" Is ſicklied o'er with the pale caſt of thought;
" And enterpriſes of great pith and moment,
" With this regard, their currents turn away,
" And loſe the name of action."

The very principle that runs through the whole of this celebrated paſſage, is as mean and daſtardly as it is unphiloſophical and untrue. For none but a malignant and implacable being, ſuch as the devil has been imagined to be, could place men in a world overwhelmed with miſery, which they muſt not quit, on pain of being conveyed to one infinitely more miſerable; and yet the whole of Shakeſpeare's reaſoning amounts only to this, that the evils of this life are too great to be remedied, and too great to be borne; and that he would kill himſelf, if he were not afraid that God would ſend him into a world ſtill more wretched.

This

This reaſon for patience, as I have obſerved before, aroſe from wretchedneſs united with extreme ignorance; which would have laid waſte the earth by deſpair and ſuicide, if it had not generated ſpectres and ſcenes of wretchedneſs beyond the grave, to frighten men into patience.

But all this apparatus to oblige a man to bear harm, by fear of greater harm, would appear like the contrivances of children to impoſe on each other, to a perſon who really underſtood the general principles of the Divine Government; ſaw the intentions of nature; and felt himſelf capable of obeying them. He would reaſon thus—"A man ought never to abandon life "on any account: for it is unbecoming him to deſert his ſta- "tion; or that his departure ſhould look like a flight. If he "quits it becauſe he ſuffers for his errors and vices, he attempts "to remedy his firſt folly by a greater. If it be becauſe for- "tune perſecutes him, he deſerts his principles, which teach him, "that there can be no evils in life, but what are contrary "to that virtue and honeſty which are guided by prudence; "that there is no other good but what is virtuous and honeſt; "and that virtue and honeſty are in his own power."

Theſe principles lead a man directly to the fountains of calamities, where alone they are to be corrected. They will firſt teach him, not to bear the conſequences of his own faults, but to remove the occaſions of them; they will give him a kind of knowledge, which will be apt to allow for the faults of others, and will take off that rancour and indignation, with which ig-

norance always receives injuries. They will enable him to diſtinguiſh between thoſe difficulties which are ever in the way of great undertakings, and which train us gradually into a capacity to perform them; the defects with which nature has characteriſed us, and the miſeries we receive from others; and they will give him that patience which will carry him through difficulties, and enable him to bear the misfortunes which he cannot avoid. By their means, he will mark that period where life is retrograde; in which the parts of man begin to decompoſe; and he will order it ſo, that his deſires ſhall gradually weaken and diſengage themſelves. He will therefore go down the declivity of life, as he would a gentle deſcent; bear the decay and extinction of his powers, as he finds his paſſions ſubſiding and extinguiſhing; and he will ſink into his grave, as he would do on his bed, after the honeſt diſcharge of his duties; and with that pleaſing wearineſs, and that calm content, which ever attend the conſciouſneſs of having ſpent an active, uſeful, and happy day.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.